

Sacred Heart CV Academy

Mere Close

Leicester

LE5 3HH

ACCESS AUDIT



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INTRODUCTION

At the request of Kate Hayles, the head teacher, I visited Sacred Heart on 8 March 2019 in order to write their access audit and accessibility plan. (Legislation states that all schools must have these documents and they must be updated every 3 years.) Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy is a mainstream, state funded junior school for boys & girls in Leicester, Leicestershire, England. This was my second visit to the school and many of the previous recommendations had been implemented.

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy has a committed, friendly and well-qualified staff and benefits from a highly supportive and experienced Governing Body. Governors have an important role to play in the life of any school and Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy benefits from the expertise and advice of a range of talented individuals drawn from diverse backgrounds. All of them support the School as volunteers and give freely of their time and knowledge. Each Governor has at least one area of responsibility and all are active members of their School family. The Board of Governors work on a fiduciary basis for the benefit of the school. They are responsible for ensuring that the aims of the school are fulfilled, that it remains true to its values and that it complies with the regulatory legislation which pertains to schools in England.

It is the aim and intention of Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy to fully comply with current legislation and good practice. They wish to make their premises as accessible as possible, in line with local planning policy and the obligations imposed as service providers under the Equality Act of 2010. The School believes in equal opportunities for all the children, irrespective of social background, culture, race, gender, physical disabilities or ability

I have detailed my observations in section 4, The Audits, accompanied by comments and suggestions/recommendations. There is actually no such concept as being “fully DDA compliant” for an existing building. The phrase has entered the language but the legislation reads differently. A new public building will have to show disabled access, accessible toilets etc. but an existing structure will be asked to make “reasonable adjustments”.

The School has to anticipate the needs of its pupils and visitors as it doesn't know who will be its future pupils/visitors, but it only has to react to the needs of its employees. So, it only

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needs to make changes in this regard for staff when it appoints someone, or when a current employee decides to disclose a disability. For staff adjustments it can apply for Government money to cover almost all the cost under the “Access to Work” scheme.

My recommendations represent current best practice, but the concepts of “best practice” and “reasonable” will change with time. This is why the Act recommends a school be audited every 3 years. A further audit should be performed in March 2022.

Fire Evacuation and Health & Safety legislation may conflict with DDA legislation. When this happens, both will supersede DDA, although H & S and DDA often overlap anyway.

The Equality Act makes it clear to Schools that they must make “reasonable adjustments” to make premises accessible to all users. This has led Katherine Lady Berkerley’s to implement a range of changes in recent years to make their premises and curriculum as accessible as it can be. The school’s Accessibility Plan is available upon request and will be renewed every 3 years.

An accessible school is one in which disabled pupils are able to participate fully in the school curriculum. It is also one where the physical environment does not limit a pupil’s ability to take advantage of the education (and other) opportunities on offer. The school’s key objective is therefore to reduce and eliminate wherever possible any barriers to access to the curriculum and to allow full participation in the school community for all children, and prospective pupils, with a disability. The Equality Act of 2010 places a duty on all schools and LA’s to plan to increase accessibility in schools. The School recognises its duty in law:

- Not to discriminate against disabled pupils in their admissions and exclusions procedures
- Not to treat disabled pupils less favourably
- To take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage
- To publish an Accessibility Plan.

The School should all be complimented on the positive attitude it has towards inclusion and its ambitions to breakdown any barriers.

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In the meantime, I am available, at any time, should you require clarification or further advice on any topic in my report. With my report is included 24-hour support and advice on any aspect relating to accessibility.

Lesley Mifsud M.A. B.Ed. (Hons)

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Audit Process – Sacred Heart

The audit was undertaken in three stages:

Stage 1. Information gathering

This is undertaken as a walkthrough audit and inspection of the building using checklist.

Stage 2.

Results and recommendations

The report suggests possible improvements.

These range from small non-structural adjustments to possible major structural alterations. It also gives an indication to priorities and cost.

Checklist Ref:	Description	Applicable	
		Yes	No
1	Equality Legislation in Schools	Yes	
2	Introduction and Location	Yes	
3	Educational Visits	Yes	
4	Communication and Website	Yes	
5	Safeguarding	Yes	
6	Approach to the School	Yes	
7	Car Park	Yes	
8	Route to Reception	Yes	
9	External Ramps and Steps	Yes	
10	Main Entrance Doors	Yes	
11	Reception Area and Desk	Yes	
12	Corridors, Hallways and Internal Circulation	Yes	
13	Wayfinding and Signage	Yes	
14	Classrooms and Facilities	Yes	
15	Internal Stairs, Steps and Ramps	Yes	
16	Internal Doors	Yes	
17	WC's general provision	Yes	
18	WC's Provision for Disabled users	Yes	
19	Kitchen and Dining Hall, Staff Room	Yes	
20	Access to the Curriculum	Yes	
21	Access to the Environment	Yes	
22	Gender Identity	Yes	
23	Racial Equality	Yes	
24	Means of Escape	Yes	
25	Building Management	Yes	
26	Lifts/Stair Lifts	Yes	
27	Outdoor Spaces	Yes	

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1.2 PRIORITIES

The priorities are dependent upon various factors including:

- Compliance to AD M (Part M of The Building Regulations)
- Client's policy and objectives
- Current use of the building
- Costs involved and available resources
- Plans for refurbishment
- Maintenance programmes
- Agreement of outside agencies (such as a free holder or local highway authority)

Priority ratings are as follows:

Priority A:

Where there are potential health and safety risks or where failure to implement changes would be highly likely to attract legal implications. Immediate action is recommended to put changes into effect.

Priority B:

Where action is recommended within the short term to alleviate an access problem or make improvements that will have a considerable impact.

Priority C:

Where action is recommended within 12 - 24 months to improve access.

Priority D:

Where the recommendation involves excessive costs or should be implemented as part of a long-term plan.

1.3 KEYS FOR COSTS

Budget costs have been included in the form of bands.

- N - None
- M - Minimal
- OG - Ongoing Maintenance
- ST - Structural Change
- EX - Major Structural Change

Please note cost keys are indicative only and that Ea-Audits cannot be held liable for any misinterpretations.

1.4 ABBREVIATIONS

Used throughout the report are the following abbreviations:

- DDA** - Disability Discrimination Act
- BS8300** - British Standard BS8300: 2009 - Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the need of disabled people
- AD M** - Building Regulations Approved Document M - Access to and Use of Buildings
- FFL** - Finished Floor Level
- EQ** - Equality Act 2010

1.5 SOURCES OF GUIDANCE

Whilst for this project AD M is being used for measuring compliance, associated with the DDA, are a number of guidance notes and standards that illustrate good practice in terms of meeting the needs of disabled people.

Listed below are some documents that have been utilised for the purpose of this report.

[Building Regulations Approved Document M - Access to and Use of Buildings \(2004\)](#)

[British Standard BS8300:2009 - Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the need of disabled people.](#)

[DDA 1995 Code of Practice 'Rights of Access to Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises' 2005.](#)

[Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005, HMSO.](#)

[British Standard BS9999:2008 - Code of practice for fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings.](#)

[JMU Access Partnership & Sign Design Society - Sign Design Guide- A Guide to Inclusive Signage \(2004\).](#)

[The Access Manual, by Anne Sawyer and Keith Bright, Blackwell, 2003.](#)

[Access Audit Price Guide, Building Cost Information Service, 2002.](#)

Please note however the 'DDA' is not prescriptive in its recommendations to improve accessibility. As such, compliance with the Act cannot ultimately be determined or used as a method for assessing accessibility. Only tangible standards set out in guidance documents such as BS8300: 2009 can be referred to for 'compliance'.

1.6 IMAGES

Please note external images are used within this report; these are for illustrative purposes only. External images are indicated along with their source.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of this report is to ensure that the school meets with the requirements of part IV of the Equality Act as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and so does not discriminate against disabled pupils.

However the report will also deal with the obligations under section III of the Equality Act 2010 which relates to the provision of services to members of the public.

In order to achieve this, the report will identify where both the property and teaching processes do not meet current best practice standards and will recommend ways to overcome these issues which may incorporate adjustive works, changes to policies and procedures or a combination of the two.

It is unlikely that you will be able to implement all of our recommendations in the near future and we do recognise this. To this end a priority rating is given to each recommendation, which is designed to guide you in the formulation of the accessibility plan, which then can be incorporated into the school accessibility strategy.

The Equality Act 2010 (Old DDA) will affect the school in a number of different ways and whilst the focus of this audit relates to education this is not the only aspect where the act will apply. Three sections of the Equality Act apply to the school. The obligations under each section are outlined below:

Part IV - Education

The special educational needs and disability act 2001 extends part IV of the Equality Act which now requires that you do not discriminate against disabled people in their access to education by imposing a planning duty. As a result the school is required to prepare an Accessibility Plan to cover the following areas:

Increasing access to the school curriculum for disabled pupils
Improving the delivery of written information to disabled pupils
Improving physical access to the school environment

In turn, the school is obliged to formulate an accessibility strategy to cover all parts of the school which will relate to the accessibility plan. These obligations should compliment and integrate with the school existing special educational needs framework and should integrate with your existing SEN arrangements. This planning duty came into force in September 2002. This required that schools should have had their plans in place by April 2003. Each plan should run for minimum of three years.

There is a duty to implement, review and revise these plans, which will be regulated and then enforced by OFSTED. Independent schools will be policed by the Independent Schools Inspectorate as part of the existing schools inspection program.

Part 111. - Service provision

Any area of the school that is let to, or visited by members of the public will be covered under this section of the Act.

Under this section you are obliged to make reasonable adjustments to these areas to make them accessible to members of the public. These may include physical adjustments or adjustment policies, practices or procedures to overcome barriers to access.

Part II - Employment

As an employer it is illegal for the school to discriminate against disabled people in terms of employment, which may involve making reasonable adjustments to policies, practices or procedures or physical alteration to the premises.

This will cover areas such as recruitment, promotion and dismissal as well as premises.

In terms of premises this presents a reactive duty, as there is no obligation to take anticipatory steps to make a building accessible but rather to make reasonable adjustments for each disabled person.

This being said it will be prudent to incorporate accessibility into any refurbishment of staff areas.

We have outlined above the legislation, which applies to this school, and you will note that you have obligations under Part II of the Act in respect of employment. This area of legislation is very much related to the individual employee or potential employees and as such will generally represent a reactive duty, with alterations being designed to meet the individuals' needs. As a result private areas not open to members of the public, or pupils, such as offices and staff areas will not be covered by this report.

Our general advice in respect of these areas is to have a procedure in place to identify the needs of the employees or potential employees and then make physical alterations, when necessary, to suit the individual.

We further confirm that plant rooms and worktops etc not used for educational purposes are not covered by this report.

As the schools SEN provision should focus on individual pupils needs, including auxiliary aids, specific arrangements and teaching assistance (which may need to be funded by parents), this report does not seek to recommend specific adjustments to individual classrooms relating to items such as furniture or equipment. We feel that such items should very much be designed to meet the individuals requirements and as such widespread alterations may in fact be a waste of resources, as generic solutions may often not deal effectively with an individual pupils needs.

However, we will deal with more strategic issues such as timetabling, educational practices and making the learning and recreational environment more accessible.

Although we have included the code of practice for means of escape for disabled people within our criteria, this report should not be considered as a detailed assessment of the overall means of escape provision, which should be included in the schools emergency evacuation plan.

This audit will now consider each of the barriers that a disabled visitor or pupil will face when attending your school. It will consider what we believe to be reasonable action to be taken to overcome that barrier. It will also give a guide as to the priority for the urgency for incorporating those changes into the school day. We have also provided a cost band giving the likely cost approximation of instigating changes to you premises.

In the audit we have tried to explain why a recommendation has been made, to justify why no action has been recommended where a problem exists, to give the school an insight into the problems disabled people face in accessing education/other services/of the site and also to provide more detail and further guidance as to how the recommendations should be implemented.

1.8 USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

Disability Rights Commissions

DRC helpline

Freepost

MID 020164

Stratford-upon-Avon

CV37 9BR

Telephone (0845) 762 2633

Fax (0845) 777 8878

Text phone (0845) 762 2644

Radar – Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation

12 City Forum

250 City Road

London

EC1V 8AF

Telephone (020) 7250 3222

Fax (020) 7250 0212

Minicom (020) 7250 4119

National Institute for the Blind

RNIB Customer Services

PO Box 133

Peterborough

PE2 6WS

Telephone (0845) 7023153

Minicom (0845) 585691

Royal National Institute for Deaf People

19 - 23 Featherstone Street

London

EC1Y 8SL

Telephone (020) 7296 8000

Text phone (020) 7296 8001

Fax (020) 7296 8199

Disabled Living Foundation

380-384 Harrow Road

London

W9 2HQ

Telephone (0845) 130 9177

Minicom (0870) 603 9176

Section 2 - Consultation

2.1 ACCESS GROUPS

For the purpose of this report, consultation with local Access Groups has not been undertaken. It is advisable to seek advice from various users groups and appropriate employees prior to undertaking specific adaptation works as a result of recommendations within this report.

2.2 CONSERVATION AREA / LISTED BUILDING STATUS

If the site or buildings have a listed building status or not, professional advice must be sort for planning applications.

2.3 FIRE OFFICER

Where recommendations have been suggested that may have an effect on the evacuation strategy, additional consultation with the Fire Officer is advised prior to works being undertaken.

Section 3 - Site Details

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

Description	Details
Date of Construction:	1970's
Constructed of:	Traditional Construction
Number of Buildings	1
Access Via:	Main Front Entrance and various entrances into other areas
External Areas:	Play areas, 2 playgrounds, lots of outdoor play equipment..
No. Passenger/Platform Lifts/Stair lifts	1
No. Staircases	Small internal stairs

3.2 FACILITIES IN PLACE

Facilities	Details
Ramps	Yes
Stair lift	No
Visual indicators for fire alarms	No
Induction loops / Infrared systems	No
Accessible toilets	Yes
Tactile signage	No
On site assistance	On Site
Designated Disabled parking areas	Yes
Evacuation chairs	No



Terms of this Equality Act 2010 Audit

The audit addresses and recognises the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 and 2005). The report includes recommendations for required remedial actions and ongoing monitoring and control measures. Guidance is also referred to such as BS8300: 2009 - Design of Buildings and Their Approach to Meet the Needs of Disabled People - Code of Practice; along with other applicable sources where appropriate.

The content of this report is based on the information and access provided to the consultant at the time of this audit. Any recommendations or advice in this report is based upon evidence seen. Whilst every care is taken to interpret current Acts, Regulations and Approved Codes of Practices, these can only be authoritatively interpreted by Courts of Law. Undergoing of the recommendations in the report could assist in meeting the requirements of the Equality act 2010/ Disability Discrimination Act but does not guarantee it. Nor does compliance with this report remove any liability on the part of the client or give protection against legal proceedings.

PURPOSE OF AUDIT

The purpose of the access audit is to assess how well a site performs in terms of access and ease of use by a wide range of potential users, including people with disabilities. The audit provides a certain "snapshot" of a building at one point in its life. As the starting point of an ongoing access action plan, it can be used to highlight areas for improvement as well as a general risk assessment.

The most obvious part of a building, which determines its accessibility, is the shell. Decisions made by the architect can fundamentally affect the accessibility for a long time.

When the building is fitted out, fixtures and fittings can be critical. Most do not survive as long as the building itself, and if deficiencies are identified, these can be included in the next potential refurbishment.

A building is next furnished and equipped, and at this stage many mistakes can occur. Furnishings are generally short-lived so opportunities for improvement tend to occur more regularly.

Finally, as the building is occupied, the way it is used and managed becomes crucial. Accessibility is affected when bad housekeeping exists causing tripping hazards or over-zealous polishing leads to slippery floors. Continual monitoring by management therefore has a considerable role to play.

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This report can be provided in large print or Braille on request.

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy Access Audit

Item No.	Comments	Recommended	Priority	Est. Cost
Equality Legislation in Schools				
1.1	<p>Following the introduction of the Equality Act in 2010, the rules regarding discrimination in schools, the work place and public spaces have never been easier to understand, and there are few excuses for those who get it wrong. The Government's aim is that by 2020 they want England to be the best place in the world to grow up. That includes providing every child and young person with learning opportunities and challenges which build their confidence and self esteem and set them on the road to a fulfilling future as a UK citizen.</p> <p>The Children Act 2004 provides the legal framework for the Government's national change programme, Every Child Matters – Change for Children. It requires all partner agencies to work together to improve five key outcomes for all children and young people, including those with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities: • Be healthy • Stay safe • Enjoy and achieve • Make a positive contribution • Achieve economic well-being</p>			
1.2	<p>The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has a continuing commitment to improving provision for disabled children and children with SEN in mainstream schools and special schools. The Primary Capital Programme and Building Schools for the Future (BSF) are a unique opportunity to transform our schools and provide innovative learning environments that will support and inspire pupils to achieve. This includes improving special school provision, most of which will be re-built or refurbished by 2020. Schools vary in the facilities and specialist services they offer. The needs of children with SEN and disabilities are met by schools working in partnership with parents, with other schools (sometimes as part of a co-located campus) and with the NHS and other children's services. An attractive, accessible school environment promotes a sense of belonging and self-worth. Inclusive school design goes beyond a one-size-fits-all model, considering all users and addressing any barriers that might deny anyone - children with SEN and disabilities, disabled staff and visitors.</p>			
1.3	<p>Schools are a vital community resource. Now all schools provide access to a range of extended services - childcare in primary schools, parenting support, swift and easy referral to targeted and specialist services, and wider community access to IT, sports and arts facilities, including adult learning. Designing for disabled children and those with SEN is an essential part of this extended community focus. New arrangements for 14–19 year olds require schools and other providers to work together in partnerships, many of which build on earlier collaborative arrangements. No institution acting alone will be able to provide the full 14–19 offer to their learners. Schools, colleges, training providers, employers and other stakeholders will have to collaborate, focusing on what they do best to deliver the curriculum. School design needs to take account of a school's role in local partnership arrangements, the particular contribution that the school makes, the additional pupils who may be using school facilities and the extra movement between sites that may be involved. Children and young people need attractive, accessible school buildings. 'Inclusive' design can enable and empower those with SEN and disabilities to participate fully in life at school and in the wider community.</p>			

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The Equalities Act 2010 requires all Schools to prepare and implement an accessibility strategy to improve the physical environment of the School for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN). This should include consideration of their particular health and safety needs on the School premises and how these can be met. Compliance with the Equality Act is not about avoiding being sued or fined but about caring for staff and pupils and improving your facilities for everyone. Legislation for Schools states that Schools must make 'reasonable' adjustments to their School buildings to make access available to all. Provisions should not just be restricted to improving wheelchair access, only 5% of those with disabilities are in wheelchairs. There are 600,000

1.4

wheelchair users BUT:

- 2.5-3 million visually impaired
- 1.5-6 million reading difficulties
- 8 million deaf or hard of hearing
- 15 million mental health difficulties
- 1 in 3 people over 55 have Arthritis

Improving access to education and educational achievement for disabled pupils is essential to ensure equality of opportunity, full participation in society, access to employment opportunities and inclusion within mainstream education.

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 amended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 by introducing new duties on local authorities (LA) and schools in relation to disabled pupils and prospective pupils. From 1 October 2010, the Equality Act replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). However, the Disability Equality Duty in the DDA continues to apply.

1.5

The main duties are not to treat disabled pupils less favourably and to take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage. Additional provision under the Equality Act 2010 was introduced in September 2012, and relates to the requirement for schools to provide Auxiliary Aids for disabled pupils subject to the Reasonable Adjustment duty.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 introduced the duty to promote disability equality from December 2006. This duty applies to schools and LAs, who have a planning duty to prepare and publish access plans and accessibility strategies in order to increase over time the accessibility of buildings, and access to education and information for disabled pupils. Schools' Access Plans should also consider access to after school activities and extended school activities if they are based on their school site. There is a requirement for maintained schools, pupil referral units (PRUs), academies and free schools to produce an Accessibility Plan.

1.6

The General Duty

This duty requires schools, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010;
 - Eliminate harassment of disabled pupils that is related to their disability
 - Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
 - Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;
 - Encourage participation by disabled people in public life;
 - Take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people.
- The General Duty applies across schools' duties, and applies to disabled pupils, staff and parents/ carers, along with other users of the school.

1.7

The Specific Duty

In addition to the General Duty, there is a Specific Duty for schools to demonstrate how they are meeting the General Duty. The main requirement is for schools to prepare and publish a disability equality scheme, involving disabled people in the development of this scheme, and to implement the scheme and report on it. In effect, the General Duty sets out what schools do, with the Specific Duty setting out how schools have to do it and what they need to record as evidence of what they have done.

1.8

Reasonable Adjustment Duty

The Equality Act requires schools and LAs to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils are not at a substantial disadvantage. Reasonable adjustments meet the statutory when they act to prevent disabled pupils being placed at a substantial disadvantage, and when they enable pupils to participate in education and associated services.

1.9

When deciding if a reasonable adjustment is necessary, schools need to consider potential impact on disabled pupils in terms of time and effort, inconvenience, indignity and discomfort, loss of opportunity and diminished progress.

At EA Audits, we believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and that children are best supported to grow and achieve within their own families. Taking into account significant changes in national policy, there is now a focus on collaborative working between schools, partner agencies and the LA through such developments as the Children and Families Act 2014. Identifying and removing barriers to access and participation must take into account extended services, new ways of working and new approaches to curriculum delivery in and around partnerships of schools, both mainstream and special. Early identification and response to issues arising is paramount, and it is the function of this access audit report to provide an overview that will ensure that this inclusive strategy is championed throughout your policies and procedures for your pupils.

1.10

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy Access Audit

1.11 Local Education Authorities (LEAs), Multi Academy Trusts and Schools, including Independent Schools have duties to make physical improvements to increase access to the School buildings which means they must gradually implement plans to improve access for disabled children. Schools should regularly review their policies, practices and procedures to ensure that disabled children are not at a disadvantage because of their disability.

1.12 The Disability Equality Duty (DED) for the public sector is a new legal duty that requires all maintained primary and secondary Schools and independent Schools to take proactive steps to ensure their disabled pupils, staff and governors, parents/carers and other people using the School are treated equally. The new duty is not necessarily about changes to buildings or making adjustments for individuals, it's about weaving equality for disabled children and adults into the culture of Schools in practical and demonstrated ways. Disability equality will need to be at the forefront of policy development, and Schools who are not already doing so, will need to start making institutional changes across the board, as well as continuing to take action to meet the needs of individuals. The DED is not about ticking the right boxes quickly. It is about a whole organisational approach to disability equality, achieved over a period of time. Schools offer a place and a reason for interaction and engagement between different children, employment opportunities for adults, and increasingly, services for the whole community. Schools are uniquely placed to help challenge and overcome discrimination in society.

1.13 The provision of education for all regardless of their age, size, ability or disabilities depends on a wide range of factors, including School policies, curriculum planning, teaching strategies, and the School environment. Well-designed Schools allow all students to participate fully and independently. This frees their teachers to focus on educational goals. Students with disabilities should be able to get around the School along with their peers. They need to be able to navigate through the School building, use standard classroom equipment, and use their own assistive technologies with ease.

1.14 The guidance in this audit focuses on the needs of students with disabilities. However, students are not the only people to use the School building. Teachers and administration staff, parents, visiting students, and those who use the School outside of core hours all have particular requirements. A 'universal design' approach allows all users to make use of the services available in the School building. A 'universal design' approach to School design will ensure that the School can be accessed, understood and used

- to the greatest possible extent
- in the most independent and natural manner possible
- in the widest range of situations, and
- without the need for adaptation, modification, assistive devices or specialised solutions

This audit is not designed to address all possible barriers for students with disabilities taking part in School life. There may well be issues around curriculum design, staff training, access to personal care, interpretation services, and access to information that go beyond the scope of this audit.

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy Access Audit

Schools will vary widely in how accessible they are to individual pupils.

Every School must have an accessibility plan, which shows how they intend to improve accessibility for special educational needs pupils, and by when these improvements will be made. In order to prepare the plan a school must firstly commission the completion of an Access Audit which is what this school has actioned. This plan must be published. It will outline how the School will:

- improve the physical environment
 - make improvements in the provision of information
- 1.15**
- increase access to the curriculum
 - Schools can also increase access for individual pupils by making 'reasonable adjustments'. These can be simple changes such as making sure that all lessons take place in ground floor classrooms for a class where one of the pupils uses a wheelchair and the School does not have a lift.

Changes to the physical environment that a School could make to increase access might include:

- lighting and paint schemes to help visually impaired children
 - lifts and ramps to help physically impaired children
- 1.16**
- carpeting and acoustic tiling of classrooms to help hearing impaired pupils

Information that is normally provided in writing (such as handouts, timetables and textbooks) can be made more accessible by providing it:

- in Braille
- 1.17**
- in large print
 - on audio format
 - using a symbol system

Adjustments that would help children with disabilities have better access to the curriculum might include:

- changes to teaching and learning arrangements
- 1.18**
- classroom organisation
 - timetabling
 - support from other pupils

Technology suited to pupils' needs can help them learn faster and more easily. This can increase their access to the curriculum. Examples of technology that can help include:

- touch-screen computers, joysticks and trackerballs
 - easy-to-use keyboards
- 1.19**
- interactive whiteboards
 - text-to-speech software
 - Braille-translation software
 - software that connects words with pictures or symbols

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- 1.20 Ofsted inspectors will discuss with each school how it is meeting statutory requirements and evaluate and report on the impact of the school's actions. This may include a school's accessibility plan as part of the evidence – Inspecting Equalities: briefing for Section 5 inspection, September 2012, number 090197.

Introduction and Location

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy is situated in Mere Close, Off Mere Road, Leicester. Leicester is a city and unitary authority area in the East Midlands of England, and the county town of Leicestershire. The city lies on the River Soar and at the edge of the National Forest. In the 2011 census the population of the City of Leicester unitary authority was c.330,000 making it the most populous municipality in the East Midlands region. The associated urban area is also the 11th largest by population in England and the 13th largest in the United Kingdom. Leicester is at the intersection of the north/south Midland Main Line and east/west Birmingham/Leicester/Cambridge Cross-country railway lines and the confluence of the M1/M69 motorways and the A6/A46 trunk routes. The main bus operators for Greater Leicester are Arriva Fox County, Centrebus, First Leicester, Hinckley Bus (Part of Arriva Midlands), Kinchbus, Leicester Bus, and Stagecoach Midlands.



- 2.1 Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy currently has approx. 430 students in the age range - 3-11. The School is in a residential area close to the centre of Leicester. There is a bus stop nearby and tactile paving. There are three pedestrian entrances. There are two car parks one at the front and one at the rear of the School. There is one disabled parking bay. There are external ramps and some stepped entrances. The main entrance is accessible and most of the pupil entrances are accessible.
- 2.2 There is a School hall, a Canteen, a Library, a Medical Room but no IT suite. There is one disabled toilet in the main reception. There is a platform lift. Externally there is an adventure playground, a MUGA, courts and playgrounds.

- 2.3 School Mission Statement - "We believe that God's Spirit is at work in everyone in our community. We will provide an environment of joy, hope and reflection in which the skills to fulfil God's desires for us, as unique individuals, are cultivated." The mission statement sets out their unique vision for this Sacred Heart Catholic School at this time, in this part of Leicester. The statement is authentic and comes from the call from Jesus Christ to love our neighbours. Our community is inclusive and exists for everybody to help them realise through education, what God's route is for us. Governors, staff and children frequently "unpick" the statement to explore the many challenges that it gives us all. Sacred Heart is a member of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust (CMAT). The Trust was established by the Rt Rev Patrick McKinney, Bishop of Nottingham, and came into being on 1 September 2018. The existence of the CMAT provides new ways for the schools to work together. Children benefit from the expertise of staff from across the schools, and they will have increased opportunities to work with young people from other schools also. Training for the staff will provide even greater quality in their classrooms, and better value for money will mean that more resources can be focussed in those classrooms.

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Other schools in the Trust are - Primary Schools - Christ the King Catholic Voluntary Academy – Leicester, Holy Cross School – a Catholic Voluntary Academy – Whitwick, Holy Cross School Catholic Primary School – Leicester, Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy – Loughborough, St Charles' Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy – Measham, St Clare's Primary School – a Catholic Voluntary Academy – Coalville, St Francis Catholic Primary School – Melton Mowbray, St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy – Wigston, St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy – Leicester, St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy – Market Harborough, St Mary's Primary School – a Catholic Voluntary Academy – Loughborough, St Patrick's Catholic Primary School – Leicester, St Peter's Catholic Primary School – a Voluntary Academy – Hinckley, St Peter's Catholic Voluntary Academy – Earl Shilton, St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy – Leicester, St Winefride's Catholic Voluntary Academy – Shepshed. Secondary Schools - De Lisle College – a Catholic Voluntary Academy – Loughborough, English Martyrs' Catholic School – a Voluntary Academy – Leicester, St Martin's Catholic Voluntary Academy- Stoke Golding and St Paul's Catholic School – a Voluntary Academy – Leicester.

- 2.4 Sacred Heart is a happy and safe place in which to learn. The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school actively promotes safe practices including teaching pupils how to act if they feel unsafe. Teachers are active in helping pupils deal with the threat of cyber bullying. This includes e-safety training days and directing families to where they can gain further information and support. This means pupils understand how to keep themselves and one another safe through their responsible attitudes and awareness of potential risks. Lesson planning takes into account all groups of pupils including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and the most able. Teachers challenge all groups of pupils by providing tasks that make them think. This creates an environment where disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs can flourish and make similarly good progress as the others.

- 2.5 Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy is a well planned school with only a few areas which could be improved for pupils and visitors with a disability. The School is doing all it can to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the access in the buildings and is doing everything it can to comply with The Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments have been made for all children with SEND where necessary. When a child with a particular disability is admitted to the school, they consult with outside agencies for extra guidance when necessary. The school is fully committed to following the guidance contained in the report.

Educational Visits

Every effort should be made to ensure that school journeys and activities are available and accessible to all who wish to participate, irrespective of special educational or medical needs, ethnic origin, sex, religion etc. All young people should be encouraged to participate in as wide a range of activities as possible. Pupils can derive a good deal of educational benefit from taking part in visits with their school. In particular, they have the opportunity to undergo experiences not available in the classroom.

- 3.1 Visits help to develop a pupil's investigative skills and longer visits in particular encourage greater independence. Most school visits take place without incident and it is clear that teachers are already demonstrating a high level of safety awareness. But, following a number of tragic incidents involving schoolchildren in the last few years, there is a growing concern amongst school staff and parents about further ensuring the safety of pupils on school visits

Ensuring accessibility of any activities or events that involve travelling outside School grounds will help all students to participate fully in School life. This would include educational trips, such as, visits to museums or theatres, visits to other Schools, sports events, or work experience. It is also important to review the accessibility of the destination, and the transport to and from the destination, as part of the planning of any such activities.

If a visit is to cater for pupils with special needs, a suitable venue should be selected.

- 3.2 Additional safety measures to those already in place in the school may be necessary to support pupils with medical needs during visits. All teachers supervising visits should be aware of a pupil's medical needs and any medical emergency procedures. Summary sheets held by all teachers, containing details of each pupil's needs and any other relevant information provided by parents, is one way of achieving this. If appropriate, a volunteer teacher should be trained in administering medication, if they have not already been so trained, and should take responsibility in a medical emergency. If the pupil's safety cannot be guaranteed, it may be appropriate to ask the parent or a care assistant to accompany a particular pupil.

If teachers are concerned about whether they can provide for a pupil's safety or the safety of other pupils on a trip because of a medical condition, they should seek general medical advice from the School Health Service or further information from the pupil's parents. (For further DfE guidance see Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs: A Good Practice Guide) Schools will already be familiar with the nature of a pupil's special educational needs. Any limitations or problems the pupil may have should be taken into account at the planning stage and when carrying out the risk assessment. Off-

- 3.3 site visits may pose additional difficulties for a pupil with SEN and the behaviour of some pupils may prove challenging. The following factors should be taken into consideration:

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- 3.4 Enquiries should be made at an early stage about access and facilities for securing wheelchairs on transport and at residential centres etc, if appropriate. If ramps are not going to be available in certain places, the organiser may wish to arrange to take portable ramps with them. The group leader should at an early stage assess whether manual handling skills will be needed and, if so, whether training should be sought.

- 3.5 Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy organises trips to Beaumanor Hall, Stonehurst Farm and a Residential trip to Kingswood. A full list of their recent trips can be found on their web site and in the newsletters.

Communication and Web Site

- 4.1 The Schools Information Act 2012 required the online publication of a large number of documents and policies. These can easily be found on the School web site. The school has chosen a content management system that supports accessibility. They have used headings correctly to organize the structure of their content and included proper alt text for images. Their links have unique and descriptive names and they have used colour with care. Their forms have been designed for accessibility and they have used tables for tabular data and not for layout. They have ensured that all content can be accessed with the keyboard alone in a logical way. They have used ARIA roles and landmarks and made dynamic content accessible. Information that is normally provided in writing (such as handouts, timetables and textbooks) can be made more accessible by providing it: in Braille, in large print, on audio format and using a symbol system. It is essential that the Web be accessible in order to provide equal access and equal opportunity to people with diverse abilities.

- 4.2 The school web site should be fundamentally designed to work for all people, whatever their hardware, software, language, culture, location, or physical or mental ability. When the site meets this goal, it is accessible to people with a diverse range of hearing, movement, sight, and cognitive ability. Thus the impact of disability is radically changed on the Web because the Web removes barriers to communication and interaction that many people face in the physical world. Putting together an accessible school website is a critical and fundamental first step toward Equality compliance. It will not only form the foundation of your implementation plan and steer your website design going forward, but will create a mechanism for handling any issues or complaints about how and where specifically your website presents obstacles for those individuals with disabilities.

Suggest a contact page be created with a Google map to the School and a contact message page. This could include information on Head Teacher, Safeguarding and SENCO.

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- 4.3 For example, some people cannot use a mouse, including many older users with limited fine motor control. An accessible website does not rely on the mouse; it provides all functionality via a keyboard. Then people with disabilities can use assistive technologies that mimic the keyboard, such as speech input. Just as images aren't available to people who can't see, audio files aren't available to people who can't hear. Providing a text transcript makes the audio information accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as to search engines and other technologies that can't hear.

- 4.4 Improvement in communication technology (internet, email, text messaging, social networking sites and video phone links etc.) has enabled easier links between deaf people, and between deaf people and those with hearing. This has also served to emphasise the importance and value of good literacy skills and encouraged better levels of attainment. The consequence of all the above changes has been the raising of educational expectations for deaf children, particularly in respect of language, achievement and attainment levels. These can be much closer to hearing norms for many deaf children than was previously considered possible.

- 4.5 Providing information on the accessible features of a building and its grounds on the School website is useful for potential new students and first-time visitors to the School. The website is very informative and the School has created the website to keep parents up to date with School news and notices, and to showcase some of the great things their pupils are achieving. Their web site is also a reference point for information. The School is committed to making its web site as accessible as possible to users with disabilities, including users who may be blind or partially sighted. They also make sure that those users who have reading difficulties are able to use the site. The School has designed their site to be accessible for disabled users and visitors using the different technologies (browsers, screens etc.)The School is also aware of the needs of adult users and of its parent body. Information for parents can be provided in large print format on request. If any parents need any other form of adaptation or accommodation the School asks that people get in touch with them so that they can discuss how best to help.

- 4.6 For visitors, displayed on the web site, there should be contact details for the School and a link to Google maps which makes it easier for a visitor to the website to locate the School. The school has ensured that there are directions on their web site. The following is displayed:
- Contact Address:
Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy 01162
624418
office@sacredheart.leicester.sch.uk
Mere Close, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 3HH

Safeguarding

- 5.1 The School takes safeguarding very seriously – they ensure their children are kept safe in lots of different ways: They only employ qualified and trained staff who have had an enhanced criminal records check. All volunteers and visitors are also checked and given a “Safeguarding” briefing before they have access to the site. They have a safe and secure building and grounds; they carry out daily, weekly or yearly risk assessments for the equipment and areas used by all children, both in the School grounds and whenever they go for trips beyond their boundaries. All staff have regular safeguarding training and they focus on the well-being of every child individually. This means that all parents and visitors to the School may only be given entry to the building after they have registered with the School office staff at the main entrance. The Designated Safeguarding Leader (Child Protection) Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – Alison James, Kate Hayles, Ann Southall and Kerry Sharpe.

- 5.2 Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 requires local education authorities and the governors of maintained Schools and further education (FE) colleges to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The Teacher Standards 2012 state that teachers, including head teachers should safeguard children’s wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties. The statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) covers the legislative requirements and expectations on individual services (including Schools and colleges) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2014) is issued under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002. Schools and colleges must have regard to this guidance when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- 5.3 Improvements in safeguarding have been rapid and widespread in recent years, and nearly all schools now give an appropriately high priority to getting their safeguarding procedures right. In her commentary on the findings set out in Ofsted’s 2009/10 Annual Report, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector wrote:
‘Safeguarding...is an issue addressed not only with increasing sureness by those responsible for keeping children and learners safe, but one felt keenly by those most vulnerable to harm and neglect.’
There can be no issue of greater importance to parents and carers, or to schools, than the safety of their children; safeguarding remains high on Ofsted’s agenda and will continue to do so.

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- 5.4 The school recognises the importance of creating an ethos within school that will help children to feel safe and confident that they will be listened to. They recognise that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. When at school their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. The school recognises these facts and all the staff are trained in keeping a watchful eye on all their pupils and bringing any worries about safe guarding to the relevant person. The School aim for all their students to: make excellent academic progress, develop exemplary interpersonal skills and qualities and participate in a wide range of competitions, projects and tasks.

- 5.5 As a school they take their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of their children extremely seriously. Improving outcomes for all their students underpins all of the work within this school. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and as such their school aims to create the safest environment within which every student has the opportunity to achieve. They are very conscious of the need to keep their children safe and it is for this reason that visitors may find it hard to get into the school building. It is also important for security reasons that they know who is in school at all times. The school recognises that every member of its staff has a key role in prevention of harm, early identification, intervention and support for young people at risk of significant harm and will endeavour to provide an environment where young people are valued and know that their concerns will be taken seriously. They strive to create an atmosphere where young people feel able to disclose information and seek support and where young people are safe and feel safe. All their staff have been provided with and signed to acknowledge they have read Part One of the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', DfE (2015 updated 2016) All staff have been updated on the September 2018 amendment to the legislation.



- 5.6 Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy fully recognises its responsibility under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to work together with other agencies to ensure effective arrangements within their school to identify, assess and support children who are suffering from harm. Their policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004; the Education Act 2002, and in line with government publications: 'CounterTerrorism and Security Act' 2015, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2013, Revised Safeguarding Statutory Guidance 2 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' 2000, 'What to do if You are Worried a Child is Being Abused' 2003. The policy also reflects, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2016'. The School has an electronic signing in policy.

Approach to the School

- 6.1 Convenient travel routes and distances make life easier for people with SEN and disabilities, especially for those with mobility aids, sensory and learning disabilities and autism. The exact requirements will depend on the school's particular arrangements and who will be coming to the school. Children may arrive on foot, by bicycle or buggy and may be using wheelchairs or other mobility aids. Some will use public or private transport – In a special school particularly there may be several vehicles arriving to drop children off at the same time. Arrival and departure take time and resources, which calls for careful operational planning (and must ensure health and safety). Transferring children in wheelchairs from the rear or side of a vehicle is a slow process, which takes place in all weathers.

- 6.2 The School is situated in a residential area. Access to the entrances are level and are accessible by all. The pavements are in good condition. Tactile paving/dropped kerbs have been used where necessary in the locality to assist disabled people. Tactile paving (also called truncated domes, detectable warnings, tactile ground surface Indicators, detectable warning surfaces) is a system of textured ground surface indicators found on many footpaths, stairs and train station platforms to assist pedestrians who are blind or visually impaired. Yellow zigzag lines are in place in front of the School. School Keep Clear road markings were initially introduced in the 1964 Traffic Signs Regulations. They were originally consisting of broken white lines that formed a box containing the words 'School Entrance'. In 1975 these markings were changed to the current yellow zig zag lines with the words 'School Keep Clear' placed between the zig zag lines. Due to the success in helping to prevent accidents between motorists and children, these yellow zig zag lines are now seen at the majority of school entrances and exits throughout the UK.

- 6.3 Traffic can be a particular hazard for some people, including people with mobility difficulties, those who have difficulty remembering and concentrating, and for those with sensory disabilities who cannot hear or see the vehicles. In the School grounds, Schools should provide separate routes or pavements for pedestrians and pupils to keep them away from vehicles. The most effective way to do this is to separate pedestrian from vehicle activity, by making routes entirely separate. Where possible, pedestrian traffic routes should represent the paths people would naturally follow (often known as 'desire lines'), to encourage people to stay on them. The pedestrians are kept safe as they have separate entrances from the vehicular traffic and a fence has been erected to protect them.



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There are three pedestrian entrances -

There are no obstructions from the main pedestrian entrance to the School entrance and the routes are smooth and free from loose stones. The pedestrian entrances provide level access. Children enter the School through a designated entrance. The route is free from hazards and easily accessible.

Although I surveyed the buildings in the day time, the routes are free from shadows and would not cause a problem for the partially sighted. External street lighting is provided throughout and is available on approach to the site. Adequate lighting is essential for all visitors and staff not just the disabled. Avoid strong lights or heavy shadows. The gate handles and gate stanchions do not contrast with the gates. This allows the visually impaired to locate the gates and the handles.

Ensure that the gate handles and stanchions contrast with the gates.

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6.4



To get to and from School, Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy encourages walking for the pupils who live near by. There are lots of benefits: it's healthier than travelling by car, it improves the safety of pedestrians and road-users, and it respects nearby residents and parking regulations. They ask all parents that if they do need to travel by car, that they park wisely and they are asked not to block driveways or mount pavements when parking.

6.5

Car Park

There are two car parking areas for staff and visitors - one at the front of the School and one at the rear. It is open air/surface parking. The car park surfaces is tarmac. Parking areas are of adequate dimensions and provide for satisfactory circulation and manoeuvring space. Vehicles are able to enter and leave the car parks in a forward direction. There are no safe walkways for pedestrians in the car park. Pedestrian walkways are designated areas in car parks, intended for those on foot. They lead to specific areas, such as entrances. The intent behind pedestrian walkways is safety, to keep people walking apart from those in vehicles and to reduce the incidence and possibility of accidents in the car park. Pedestrian walkway safety is vitally important. There may be a hearing impaired person who doesn't hear a car which could be reversing out of its car park space. School car parks can be dangerous. Children may feel safe but drivers can't always see them, especially when reversing.

An example of a pedestrian safe walkway which would benefit the car parks. Paint pedestrian walkways in the car park as illustrated.

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7.1



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For a number of wheelchair users and mobility impaired people it is very important that designated, well sized, accessible parking bays are provided as close as possible to the entrance points. If there is not sufficient size to allow a person to transfer from the car to a chair it may actually prevent that person from visiting the building at all or could result in them parking improperly causing an obstruction to other users. As a result it is essential that an adequate number of well-designed accessible bays are provided. For a site of this type and use there is no specific guidance to follow but we would suggest that 5% of the overall parking provision should be made available for disabled use. Having provided well designed accessible parking it is equally important to ensure that pedestrian routes to and from the main disabled entrance are accessible as well as routes for other pedestrians. Routes should be level, free from steps, bollards and steep slopes which present difficulties for many disabled people. Moveable street furniture such as bins, seating and A-boards should be carefully located so as to not obstruct walking routes. Well-designed dropped kerbs with appropriate tactile paving should be provided where necessary.

7.2

There is one disabled parking space available. (According to A.D.M.- Designated parking bays should be included: workplaces: 1 space per employee known to be a disabled motorist, plus at least one space or 5% of the total capacity. There must be a minimum of one space.) The approach to the School entrance from your accessible bay has a flat, smooth transfer available for wheelchair users and is as close as possible to the entrance. The accessible bay has been designed so that drivers and passengers, any of whom may be disabled and need the bay, can get in and out of the car easily and safely. The bay should be longer and wider than a standard bay to ensure easy access from both sides and at the rear. This is because people may need to extend their doors fully to get out of/into their vehicle or may need extra room to transfer to or from their wheelchair. Best practice recommends that the actual parking space should be at least 4.8m by 2.4m.

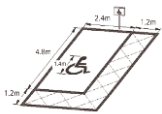
7.3



In addition the hatched areas should allow a 1.2m access zone between bays at the side and 1.2m at the rear for easy boot access. Disabled users are likely to be more vulnerable to collision with traffic and a mobility impaired or elderly person is unlikely to be able to move as quickly as a disabled person. Equally a visually impaired person will be less aware of oncoming traffic. As a result a safe route should be provided from accessible parking bays to the nearest exit or entrance.

7.4

Correct measurements and markings for a disabled car park space. Any new bays should be designed to meet the requirements of BS8300: 2001. In effect this design insures that the surface is relatively level, have a hard finish and free from stones, gravel etc.



As well as a sign on the ground as provision for disabled drivers or passengers only, there should also be a sign immediately in front of the space, or to the side of the space, which is good practice. This is needed in case of snow or leaf covering on the ground. For wheelchair users signs should be placed between 1000mm and 1100mm above floor level. The lettering should be in small case and should contrast with the sign board, and the sign should have a matt surface. Symbols can be used to supplement written signs. There is a sign in front of the accessible space in the car park.

7.5

- 7.6 Directions to the disabled car parking are required to be placed at the entrance to the site so any disabled visitors know which way to go to access the designated disabled car park space.

Example of suitable signs for directions to the disabled car parking space.



B M

Route to Main School Reception

- 8.1 The approach from gate to entrance doors should have:
- vehicular circulation that allows for public and private transport, including set-down and drop-off without congestion (for example, one way or roundabout traffic flow), and makes provision for emergency access and maintenance
 - designated safe pedestrian routes – some people have less awareness of the risks of traffic (or cannot see/hear vehicles) See 7.1
 - easily accessible, level or ramped slip-resistant and well-drained surfaces along the route, without trip hazards and with an accessible stepped route nearby to give a choice
 - suitable car parking, with accessible parking bays near the entrance (subject to local planning)
 - good quality external lighting for routes, clear legible signage, visual contrast and sensory wayfinding to help independence

- 8.2 Children may all enter the school through the main entrance, or there could be separate entrances, depending on the way the school is organised. For younger pupils, entry might be via a gated or fenced area, with sheltered access and waiting areas. The school building's entrance should be easily identified from a distance by its design, location, lighting and signage (tactile signs are generally not recommended for external use), and have:
- a level threshold with a safe, level drop-off zone that has, ideally, only shallow gradient ramps
 - a canopy or covered access to the pavement for children transferring to or from buses or taxis

- 8.3
- sheltered, accessible waiting spaces - for parents with other children, if appropriate, and for children with SEN and disabilities to wait for assistance - with a visible, easily operated entry phone or intercom to reception
 - easily operated doors, such as automatically operated sliding doors, with appropriate fail safe mechanisms, wide enough and in a safe and secure position
 - sufficient circulation space for people (including those in wheelchairs) to gather inside the building at the start and finish of the school day, avoiding congestion – safety is paramount, since this can be a particularly stressful time for some children
 - a good visual link between inside and outside, so that reception staff can oversee and supervise easily (CCTV cameras should be discreet and not detract from the welcome or reduce accessibility)

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8.4

The route to the main School entrance where the reception is, is easy to locate. The main School building and entrance are visible on approaching the School. (Lack of external signage could potentially render the entrance difficult to locate, particularly to a first time visitor. Hearing impaired people could also become anxious at having to ask for directions.) Surfaces on routes for visitors, staff and pupils are smooth, slip-resistant, firm, level, well-drained and free from loose stones. They are wide enough and free from most hazards including windows opening outwards.

External Ramps and Steps

Ramps should have the following dimensions: 1.5m wide with a minimum unobstructed width of 1.5m. Have a maximum individual flight of 10m and maximum gradients of 1:20 if longer than 5m, 1:15 if longer than 2m or 1:12 if shorter than 2m.

9.1

Have 100mm high raised kerbs to any open side of ramp or landings
Have a continuous suitable handrail on each side.
(see Part M Access to buildings other than dwellings)

9.2

On ramp and step access there should be handrails both sides, which are continuous throughout the flights, ramps and landings, visually contrasting, easy to grip: slip resistant, non-reflective and not cold to touch. Handrails to project 300mm beyond top and bottom landings with closed ends. Handrails to be between 900mm and 1000mm above surface or steps pitch line / 900mm and 1100mm above surface of landings. Handrail profile to be diameter between 40mm and 45mm (where circular) or Oval 15mm min radius (preferred solution) min 50mm width (refer dia 7 A.D.M). Max 100mm projection into surface width of steps, landings or ramps. Clearance of between 60mm and 75mm between handrail and any wall surface. Min 50mm clearance between the cranked support and the underside of the handrail. Inner face to be N.M.T 50mm beyond the surface width of the ramp or step access.

9.3

For the disabled, ramps are an essential part of everyday life, and a simple way of making life just a little easier. The ramp lengths and the gradients are suitable and they are wide enough to full length of ramp slope and landings. The top and bottom landings are of adequate size. The surfaces are suitable and the slope surfaces are visually contrasting with the landings. The ramps have been built in line with guidelines in Approved Document M (ADM) of The Building Regulations 2010 and BS8300:2009+A1:2010. Where there are handrails or barriers at steps and ramps, the rails should be highlighted with tape or painted in a bright contrasting colour to aid visually impaired students/visitors. Where access is via a ramp, the start and ends of the slope need to be indicated. This can be done with a thick stripe of white or yellow paint across the width or a boldly painted white triangle pointing in the direction of the slope.

Mark tape at the start and end of every handrail to aid the visually impaired students and visitors. Mark start and end of ramps as indicated. Ensure that the ramps and ramped entrances are kept clear of grit and gravel which could present a trip hazard and that the surfaces are kept in good condition.



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2 Handrails should always be provided on either side of a ramped entrance as people who have difficulty negotiating changes of level need the support of handrails. For example someone with cerebral palsy would only have strength to one side of the body and so would require a rail to be fitted either side of the ramp for ascent and descent.

Consideration should be given to the provision of a second (lower) handrail set at 600mm on stairs, particularly in Schools, for use by children and people of short stature.

- 9.4 Handrails should be easy to grip and provide good forearm support for people who are unable to grip. They should be configured with a positive end to reduce the risk of clothing being caught on the ends of rails.

Surfaces such as hardwood or nylon coated steel are recommended in preference to surface materials that are cold to the touch.

The handrails should be easily distinguishable from their background, without being highly reflective.

Provide two handrails at the ramps which contrast with the ramps. Paint existing ones.

B M

Steps and stairs should be carefully detailed for the benefit and safety of everyone. Accompanying handrails are important for people with walking difficulties and impaired balance. There should be handrails either side in a contrasting colour. (Only if there are more than 3 risings.) Blind and visually impaired people benefit particularly from handrails which extend at the top and bottom of flights, especially when descending. On wide flights of steps, handrails should be used to divide the flight into channels. ADM states that on flights of steps wider than 1800mm, handrails should be used to divide the flight into channels between 1000 and 1800mm, (but note anomaly here: taking into account the width of handrails, a flight needs to be at least 2050mm wide to be divided such that each channel is 1000mm wide).

9.5

The school has external steps. All steps in frequent use should be painted with contrasting nosings OR have tactile paving at the top and bottom of the flight of steps. This will alert a sight impaired person to a change in level. Nosings should be 2 inch strips which are painted or attached to the front and top of each step. Usually yellow is used as it is a good contrasting colour. If nosings are not painted then tactile paving should be used. Nosings, (stair edgings) are used to define the edges of steps in line with guidelines in Approved Document M (ADM) of The Building Regulations 2010 and BS8300:2009+A1:2010. Nosings can help to reduce accidents on stairs and steps as well as helping to provide an 'inclusive' environment giving access to all school users.

9.6

Paint nosings on all outside steps where necessary and where there is no tactile paving and re-paint at the first sign of wearing. Paint nosings in a contrasting colour.

B M



Main Entrance Door to School

The Accessible entrance should be clearly sign posted and easily recognisable (i.e. by using lighting and visual contrast features). Watch for obstructions such as canopies / support posts etc. The accessible entrance should be signed using International Symbol for Access. Obstructions and hazards outside entrance doors to be avoided – particularly non-building related items i.e. planters / sign boards etc. Level landing outside entrance door 1500 x 1500mm clear of door swings – surface finish non-slip and of materials that would not impede wheelchair access. Level threshold entrance door – max 15mm / chamfered or rounded edges. Weather protection to be provided for non-powered doors. Access systems to be suitable for deaf and hard of hearing (CCTV). Internal floor surfaces adjacent to threshold must suit wheelchair users / or create trip hazards. I.e. no soft matting. Mat wells must be flush with floor surface.

10.1



10.2

The International Symbol of Access, also known as the Wheelchair Symbol, consists of a blue square overlaid in white with a stylized image of a person in a wheelchair. It is maintained as an international standard, ISO 7001.

The main School entrance should be easily identifiable from a distance by its design, location, signage and lighting. It should be easy for all students, staff and parents to use. In existing buildings, it is important to ensure that students with disabilities can use the same entrance as other students.

Access doors should be so designed as to permit operation by one person in a single motion with little effort. Power-operated doors are the best for people with disabilities. The activator system should be

10.3

automatic or placed within easy reach. An accessible door should have the following features:

Secure side – a sign, a door handle, an extra pull handle, glazing and a kick plate.

Un-secure side – a sign, user-friendly access control reader, glazing and a kick plate.

Some key considerations in relation to entrances include:

- A level threshold, without steps. A ramp can be used to address small changes in level, up to 300mm. Where there is a change in level of 300mm or more at the approach to the entrance, both a ramp and steps should be provided.

10.4

- Doors that are wide enough and easily operated. Automatically operated sliding doors provide a high level of accessibility for all users. The accessibility requirements need to be balanced with cost, maintenance issues, and security issues.

- Manual door closers should be avoided where possible. These can cause difficulties for people with mobility disabilities because of the force needed to open the door. Revolving doors should also be avoided. These can be very difficult for wheelchair users and people with mobility difficulties to use.

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- Sufficient circulation space around the entrance can minimise congestion at the start and end of the day
 - A good visual link between the internal office, reception and main entrance area, to the main external approach will help staff to identify any students or visitors in need of assistance
 - A level covered area to provide shelter to students being dropped off or collected is also desirable
 - Any access control system that stops unexpected visitors from getting into the building should be clearly visible. It should be reachable by a wheelchair user or a person of smaller stature and usable by people with hearing, speech or vision loss
 - Appropriate signage directs visitors to the entrance or reception area
- 10.5**

- In new buildings, the accessible entrance(s) should be the main entrance(s) intended for use by the general public. Each accessible entrance should be connected by accessible pathways to accessible indoor or outdoor parking areas. In order that a wheelchair user can pass through a doorset without difficulty a clear width of at least 750 mm but preferably 800mm should be achieved.
- 10.6**

- All entry doors should have a maximum opening force at leading edge of 20N and to be held shut. The door furniture should be easily operated by a closed fist and visually apparent i.e. contrasting with door surface and not cold to touch. The doors and side panels to doors wider than 450mm should have vision panels provided – visibility zone between 500mm and 1500mm and if necessary interrupted between 800mm and 1150mm above floor level e.g. to accommodate an intermediate horizontal rail. There should be non obstructed 300mm min space on door pull side between door leading edge and wall (not to powered doors). This varies according to angle of approach. Straight approach to door – 800mm clear width / right angle approach to door with access route min 1500mm - 800mm clear width / right angle approach to door with access route min 1200mm - 825mm clear width / External doors used by general public – 1000mm clear width. Door clear width measured from handle to jamb. Varies according to angle of approach. Revolving doors are not considered acceptable without additional compliant bypass doors.
- 10.7**



- The main entrance is easy to locate and is manual. It consists of a single door and a side panel made from aluminium and glass and the door handles provide sufficient contrast. It is clearly distinguishable from the building front. It is well lit and free from shadows and signed. Automatic doors make it easier for any staff or visitors with mobility issues to enter your building and are preferred if the budget allows the extra expenditure. There is an intercom for attention.
- 10.8**

Suggest a sign beside the intercom.



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10.9

Pupil entrance doors to teaching areas are mostly accessible. Doors which are predominantly glass need to be labelled or marked in some way to give a visual clue and help warn the visually impaired of the approaching hazard and judgement of distance. Glass doors in glass façade to have 150mm high contrast strip at door edges, and door protection if capable of being left open. Manifestations include additional lower level 850 to 1000mm and higher level 1400 to 1600mm, repeated on side screens. At least 150mm high if logo / sign or if decorative feature i.e. broken lines min 50mm high. Manifestations should visually contrast inside and out and in all lighting conditions. Zone of visibility lowered to 500mm above ground level. People either side of the doors, seated or standing, are able to see each other or to be seen. These entrances are also fire-exit doors. The colours of the entrance doors contrast with the surrounding surfaces so as to be distinguishable by people with sight problems. The other entrance/exit doors were checked. Some of the door handles require to be changed to d shaped handles. Because manual door closers are fitted to some of the doors make sure these are adjusted to provide the minimum force necessary to open or close the doors.

Make sure staff and students are aware of the need to offer assistance by holding open doors or carrying materials for people with disabilities who have difficulties at the entrance. Change the non-conforming door handles.

A/B

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Reception Area and Desk

11.1

The reception space should be attractive, friendly and welcoming, with:

- a secure, draught-free, convenient and welcoming lobby, with outer and inner doors and security controls, giving reception staff better access control
- an easily identifiable reception counter, ideally facing onto the secure lobby, with a sliding window or glazed screen at an accessible height, a lower section and knee recess for wheelchair users, and a hearing loop
- waiting and seating areas with sufficient space for wheelchair users or people with buggies
- visual and/or tactile signage, sited where users can take time to read it. An individual with a disability should be able to move about in the reception area without interference by furniture, planters or similar movable objects. Remember to consider persons with mobility and visual disability issues.

11.2

The Rights of Access provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, now the Equality Act, place responsibility on service providers and employers to make “reasonable adjustments” so as not to disadvantage those with any type of disability (e.g. restricted mobility, visual or hearing impairment etc) who visit their premises. There are no specific physical requirements for reception desks under the above Act and no particular furniture design or configuration can ensure compliance. Despite some misleading claims being made by some ill-informed suppliers, no item (including furniture) of any kind can be considered to be “DDA Compliant” as it is not the product but the “reasonable adjustment” that matters.

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- 11.3 When considering new reception furniture in the context of current legislation, it is very important to appreciate that furniture is only one aspect of catering sensitively for disabled visitors, pupils and staff. School procedures should ensure that any person with disabilities arriving at reception can access services whilst maintaining their independence and dignity. "Reasonable adjustments" will vary according to the circumstances. It might be sensible, for example, for reception staff to be trained how best to meet and guide a visitor with a visual impairment. Remember that a visitor who lip-reads need to be able to see the mouth of the receptionist. Overall, try to build a culture of awareness of the differing needs of the whole spectrum of our population – and if faced with a visitor who has needs you have not anticipated, politely ask how you can best assist them

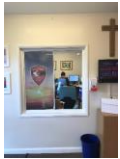
- 11.4 The entrance/reception can offer a transition lighting zone where people with visual impairments can adjust between a bright exterior and a subdued interior - the receptionist's face should be clearly visible, avoiding down-lighting that casts shadows on the face of the receptionist or visitor. The following are also recommended:
- well organised safe display of children's work to promote a sense of achievement and belonging (without impeding circulation, causing hazards or obstructing lighting)
 - safe storage of personal belongings and mobility equipment, with battery charging close by, so that there can be easy transition between equipment from home and school
 - accessible toilet(s)/changing room signposted nearby
 - a parents' room (often) located nearby

- 11.5 The transitional lighting in the reception area ensures that people can adjust to different lighting levels and the floor surfaces are slip resistant, firm for wheelchair manoeuvre, and there is no echo. (Adequate lighting is essential for all visitors and staff not just the disabled. Avoid strong lights or heavy shadows. A maintained illuminance of 200 lux is recommended.) Lighting levels within the whole of the premises were tested using an ACT light meter and it was generally found to be above the minimum recommended guidance of 100 lux at floor/landing/stair levels. It is essential that lighting levels are maintained within the premises at these levels as the light levels below this, persons with a visual impairment will have significant difficulty in negotiating their way around the premises. We recommend therefore that you continue to ensure that missing light bulbs/tubes etc. are maintained diligently and the lighting levels generally around the premises are maintained at a high level.



- 11.6 There is a seating area available once inside the School building and there is room for a person in a wheelchair to sit alongside a companion. Waiting areas are needed so it is important that there are a variety of seats available that are accessible for both the ambulant disabled and those in wheelchairs. There should also be spaces available for wheelchairs within the seated area so that those who do not wish to transfer from the chair can be seated with their companions. Ensure that those who do transfer to another chair have somewhere close at hand to store their wheelchair without blocking off part of the reception area or horizontal route.

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11.7

The reception desk/ window and area is one of the first pieces of furniture that a visitor sees when they enter a building. Good provisions here will give an immediate message to people with disabilities as to whether or not the School will be accessible. Visitors to the School will often need to read and sign documents over the desk so it is important that they have access to the counter top. The reception desk should be easily identifiable and wheelchair accessible. The counter section should be 1500mm wide, max 760mm high and 700mm knee recess above floor level. There should be clear approach and manoeuvring space in front of desk 1200mm deep by 1800mm wide if there is a min 500mm knee recess to counter, otherwise min 1400mm deep by 2200mm if no knee recess provided. There is a table nearby that could be used for wheelchair users but a more inclusive method would be a fitted hinged shelf.

Fit a hinged shelf



B M



11.8

There are over 9 million people in the UK with hearing loss. Many people benefit from wearing hearing aids but these amplify all sound, including unwanted background noise, which can make it difficult to interpret speech. Hearing enhancement systems allow hearing aid users to listen to a single sound source without any background noise and this is achieved by switching the hearing aid to a different setting. Appropriate signage to indicate the availability of a system should be clearly displayed, otherwise a hearing aid wearer will not know to use a different setting on their hearing aid. An induction loop with appropriate signage should be provided to assist hearing-aid users to communicate with the receptionist. There is no induction loop fitted to assist visitors who have impaired hearing in the reception area. When a staff member speaks into that microphone, sound is transmitted as a magnetic field which can be picked up by hearing aids when set to the 'T' setting or hearing loop program. This applies to different types of hearing aids, including digital. A portable hearing loop provides limited coverage and is designed for one to one conversation for people with hearing aids.

We suggest considering fitting the reception area with an induction loop hearing enhancement system, especially if the area is likely to be noisy. This is for the use of hearing impaired visitors/parents. The sign should be clearly displayed.

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Corridors, Hallways and Internal Circulation

12.1

According to ADM the following apply: Corridor unobstructed widths of 1200mm with 1800mm by 1800mm passing places or 1800 width without passing places. Passing places to be at reasonable intervals. Projections in to the corridor to have contrasting guardrails. Floors to be level – max gradient 1 in 60. Any gradients steeper than 1 in 20 to be designed as ramps. Ramps less steep than 1 in 20 to have max rise 500mm with 1500mm long rest landings. No door to open across the corridor (doors should be recessed back from corridor) - except a unisex toilet door where the corridor is 1800mm wide. Some minor utility cupboards can outward open i.e. small store cupboards. Slip resistance floor surfaces. Avoid patterns to floor coverings. Glazed screens alongside the corridor to have manifestation at two levels. Projections to be protected with contrasting guardrails.

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- Some children need more space than usual between themselves and others: a child learning how to use aids and manoeuvre equipment will need considerable clearance space; a member of staff walking beside a child with visual impairment will take up a lot of room; children with hearing impairment need space to sign and gesticulate while walking. All circulation areas should be wide enough for wheelchair users to pass safely in different directions (avoiding long narrow corridors or 'race tracks'). This is critical where there is a high proportion of children using wheelchairs, or needing assistance from support workers. Some children may need handrails along corridors. Approved Document M recommends that a minimum clear width in corridors for two wheelchairs passing is 1800mm (the dimension to be between handrails where provided). However, a clear width of 2m is preferable for corridors leading to more than two classrooms, with a 2.7–3m clear width in major circulation areas, particularly where there are lockers. A simple, easily understood layout, which relates to the movement patterns dictated by the curriculum activities, makes circulation around the school easier.
- 12.2**

- Designs also need to take account of emergency escape procedures (in consultation with the fire authority), incorporating the outcomes of health and safety risk assessments. Internal circulation spaces should have a light, airy, uplifting ambience to encourage positive behaviour - displays of children's work and achievements can help with this. Changes in colour, texture or proportion can all be used to help children orientate themselves
- 12.3**

- Movement and travel are part of a learning process for many children who are developing independence skills, and they should be able to move around alongside their peers. The aim is to plan for circulation that minimises travel distances and times. There should be a choice of routes to avoid congestion, conflict, difficult or long travel, and waiting.
- Children may need different types of support or supervision and might:
- use mobility aids, frames, wheelchairs, shuffle along the floor, use a handrail for support, or have a member of staff to walk beside them
 - use varied wayfinding techniques, such as signs, symbols, colour, sound, tactile cues and objects of reference to help them negotiate their environment
 - be supported by a sighted guide or learn to use sticks or tactile routes
- 12.4**

- NB Special schools need greater overall area for circulation than a mainstream school – usually at least 25 per cent of the gross internal floor area. Circulation spaces should have:
- clear signage with easily understood contrast, signs and symbols at an appropriate height
 - tamper-proof fittings, no projection points, and hazards clearly identified
 - good lighting and views out, but avoiding glare
 - robust, easily maintained finishes
 - good acoustics
 - easily identified and operated, well-sited, sufficiently wide doors, with good visibility on both sides, not directly opposite or too close to other doors, to avoid congestion
- 12.5**

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- 12.6 In primary schools, students spend most of their time during the day in one classroom. However, in secondary schools, students tend to move between different general and specialist classrooms, so ease of movement and minimising travel distances needs to be carefully considered. Where possible, schools should be planned to minimise long travel distances, which can be a barrier for some students with mobility disabilities.

- 12.7 For people with good vision, differences in colour and colour intensity provide adequate visual contrast. However, this is not the case for everybody with vision loss. The light reflectance value (LRV) of a colour is used by professional designers to identify those colours which adequately contrast against other colours. The combination of colour, tonal and visual contrasts between surfaces and objects placed on them such as switches and litter bins is good in this School and ceilings are finished in light colours. Movement and travel for people who have reduced vision is challenging and extremely tiring. The ability to judge distance, depth and speed is often compromised and therefore the need to negotiate busy, cluttered and unpredictable environments can increase stress, diminish concentration, learning and social opportunities while also increasing accident risk. All the floor surfaces are suitable and easy for a wheelchair to manoeuvre. The means of escape are clearly visible from both a standing and seated position.

- 12.8 ADM - Corridors and passageways should be wide enough to allow people with wheelchairs, people carrying large items or people on crutches to pass each other. Throughout the corridors, both the natural and artificial light avoids reflection, glare, shadows and silhouette. The lighting in the corridors is good and there is contrast between the walls and the floors. Tonal contrast between different features is important for people with vision loss in a number of ways: floors that contrast with walls will indicate the size of a room; handrails that contrast with the wall indicate their location; and doors that contrast with their surrounding indicate their position and help wayfinding. Improving the visual contrast in a school should be considered when carrying out maintenance or refurbishment work – for instance when painting walls and doors, or renewing floor finishes.

Wayfinding and Signage

- 13.1 The way in which information is relayed is important. Not everyone is able to read a variety of text styles, sizes and formats. Clear and concise signage is particularly important for people who find communication more difficult (such as people with hearing loss or speech impairments). Signs should be provided at each decision point where a choice of routes is available, for example more than one pathway or corridor, or a series of doors. External spaces can be a particular issue, as there is often limited visual contrast around green space and the route someone may take is not as regulated as indoors. Making routes and directions clear is very important. Some disabled people need to conserve their energy and not waste it walking around areas trying to find their destination. Others will experience fatigue, breathlessness or pain and discomfort.

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In order that signs can firstly be located and then read it is important that signboards are well contrasted to their background. Arrows can be useful to signs but they can also be very confusing if not applied correctly. In general, signs should be designed so that arrows directing users to the left, up or down are set to the left hand side of the lettering. Arrows directing to the right should be to the right hand side of the lettering. As this is the Standard method, any sign adopting a different approach may prove confusing for the visually impaired person or someone with learning difficulties.

- Using colour as an additional aid to way-finding works well in schools, as it works almost subconsciously and can be easily introduced as part of the décor or on the signs themselves. You can then co-ordinate this with a particular activity or part of the site. For example, if you had two car parks, you would be able to ask visitors to “go to the lower car park (follow the orange signs)” or “follow the brown signs for the sports facilities”. Choose colours that are different to the background they’ll be seen against (for example avoid green signs in areas that are predominantly trees, bushes and grass).
- 13.2**

Tactile information such as Braille and/ or embossed text will be helpful to some and is critical on certain signs, such as toilet doors. It is possible to add Braille information using a transparent self adhesive tape below an existing sign, on a temporary notice or even on files, lockers and equipment. There is a Dymo label maker for this, costing circa £50 but you may find a local sensory services department will offer to do this at the cost of just the tape used. The most widely used tactile information is an 19 embossed symbol or text. The RNIB also sell a product called Tactimark which is a plastic writing tube with gel with which you can create freehand text or lines – the substance dries to give an embossed finish. It is available in black, white and orange at about £6 a tube. Embossed lettering is only helpful when in easy reach (such as on a door 1500mm high or below) and it needs to be of sufficient size to be legible by touch - minimum 15mm height of initial capital letter and 1mm raised depth from the background.

13.3

- By matt laminating a simple computer print-out of appropriate text and/or symbols, and applying Tactimark pen or some Braille self-adhesive labelling it is possible to create e your own notices and signs in an accessible way. (Always use matt laminating sheets. They are only marginally more expensive and do not have the high reflectance which makes most laminated notices difficult to read under direct light or sunlight.) A painted or taped line in a distinct colour is a simple solution to some situations that are difficult to cover in signage. This can be very helpful for external environments, where the destination does not have line of sight from the departure point. Some people with visual impairments lose their ability to see colours clearly. It is therefore helpful to combine a colour with a shape, where possible – for example an orange triangle or a blue circle etc.
- 13.4**

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Good signage significantly improves the ease with which both disabled and non-disabled pupils, visitors and staff gain access to the school. A successful sign system should minimise anxiety and confusion, should be easy to understand and people with a visual impairment should not be placed at a disadvantage. As well as having an entrance that is easy to identify, circulation layouts should be clear and easy to understand. Signage and other means of orientation are invaluable for visitors and new students, particularly people with sensory disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders, speech communication and language needs, or learning disabilities. Signage is needed so people can use a building and to make orientation easy.

13.5

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy requires more directional signage incorporated into the inside of the buildings. An example is shown here.

Review internal signage and add more directional sign.

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Block capitals (BLOCK CAPITALS) are actually harder to read for the majority, especially many people with dyslexia or visual impairments as there is no shape to the word. Using an initial upper case letter and then lower case text is best (e.g. Sentence case). Everyone firstly identifies a sign by its shape rather than by recognising each individual letter. This is particularly so for the visually impaired person or someone with learning difficulties.

13.6

- Use a plain (sans serif) font such as Arial, Helvetica and Calibri (with the exception of Comic Sans which some people with dyslexia find difficult).
- Avoid small font sizes - a minimum 12 point for documents and emails, 16 point plus for large print information and notices and much bigger again for signs, depending upon viewing distance.
- Comfortable viewing heights are 1200-1700mm high for average standing height and 750-1350mm seated.
- Clear, non-reflective signage is a necessity.
- Seek a good colour contrast between the sign background and the text.

Ensure all signs and displays are in lower case.

B

N



All the classroom doors have all been signed in a uniform format. School Room Signs & Classroom Signs help students quickly and easily find the correct rooms. Room Signs help students & teachers know where they are going. These signs are especially important for children with SEND. Signage and other means of orientation are invaluable for visitors and new students, particularly people with sensory disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders, speech communication and language needs, or learning disabilities. Raised letters, Braille, and visual contrast on signs assist people who are blind or partially sighted. There are some emerging technologies that use GPS and other facilities within smartphones to provide wayfinding information to users in both visual and audible formats for large Schools.

13.7

Incorporate tactile signage in all your future signs.

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13.8

Below are some examples of signage from other Schools which show the incorporation of tactile signage.

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13.9



Classrooms and Facilities (Primary Schools)

- 14.1 Students with disabilities will have certain unique requirements that impact how they use School facilities. For example :
- Students with mobility disabilities may have particular difficulties with steps, or heavy doors. They may need additional desk space if they use a wheelchair, or additional storage space for a walking frame or crutches
 - Students with visual difficulties will benefit from improved lighting and clear visual contrasts on doorframes and support columns
 - Some students with emotional, psychological or mental health difficulties will benefit from a calming environment created by appropriate use of light and colour schemes
 - Many students have particular requirements for access to laptop computers or other assistive technology. Availability of power points for recharging will greatly benefit these students

- 14.2 Transition from early years to primary is a time of considerable change, especially for those with SEN and disabilities, who often need additional support. Generally, mainstream primary school spaces can meet the needs of most children with SEN and disabilities but in some cases additional facilities will be needed.

- In primary education, children are grouped in classes in a class base (open plan or semi-enclosed) or classroom (enclosed) and are taught most of the time by their class teacher, with teaching assistants working across the class. The curriculum covers English, mathematics and science as core subjects, together with art, science, music, design and technology (including food) Learning activities are wide and varied, ranging from formal class work to imaginative and constructive play and practical activities.

- 14.3 Primary mainstream and special schools usually provide:
- classrooms (or bases with shared areas) for whole group work
 - separate areas for practical activities, such as cooking (although these activities may take place in a class base if large enough and suitably equipped)
 - small rooms for individual and small group work
 - library/resources space
 - larger spaces (likely to be used by the school and wider community out of school hours) for activities such as drama and movement and physical education, dining and assemblies
 - a range of easily accessible outdoor spaces (a useful learning and teaching environment and invaluable for recreational, social, extended school and community use)
- These are supported by:
- staff rooms
 - storage
 - toilet and changing rooms
 - kitchen facilities. Being able to separate noisy and quiet, wet and dry activities easily will help to meet children's diverse needs.

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- BB99 recommends three sizes of classroom for primary mainstream schools – the usual is for a combination of standard and large-sized rooms. Small class bases are no longer recommended for new builds, unless they are supplemented by shared teaching area adjacent (e.g. for practical activities). In an existing mainstream school, however, it is possible to achieve an inclusive environment if, for example:
- coats, bags and/or resources can be stored nearby (if relevant)
 - fixed furniture can be minimised so staff can re-arrange it as needed
 - class numbers can be reduced to accommodate a child using a wheelchair or mobility aids. Standard class bases are large enough for all curricular activities, accommodating one child using mobility aids and a wheelchair, with access to some or all of the space, depending on the layout. Large class bases enable full accessibility, including for one or more children using mobility aids and/or wheelchairs. They may also be suitable as a class base in resourced provision for children with physical difficulties
- 14.4**

- If a school has a high proportion (30 to 50 per cent) of children with SEN and disabilities, or a significant number using wheelchairs, access can be improved by having one or two large class bases for each key stage in one or two-form entry mainstream primary schools (i.e. that have one or two new classes of 30 each year), and one large class base for each year in three-form entry mainstream primary schools
- 14.5**

- Classrooms or class bases (which may open onto a shared area) that allow flexibility in learning and teaching
 - Easy access to quiet small-group rooms (not accessed from other classrooms, which causes disruption and disturbance)
 - The ability for large open plan areas to revert easily to cellular spaces, if need be
 - Access from circulation spaces, not other classrooms (which causes disruption and disturbance)
 - The potential for arranging different groupings and activities (for example, sitting in a circle, around a table or for individual work) and for zoning activities and separating noisy and quiet
- 14.6** Links to a variety of outdoor spaces – peaceful quiet places as well as noisy active places • Support spaces and equipment to suit the children at the school.

- There is usually enough suitable space in mainstream primary schools to support children with SEN and disabilities but sometimes additional provision is needed to ensure inclusion – for example, extra small group rooms where teachers or visiting professionals can work with children individually. Positioning one small group room so that it can be shared (or used in a variety of ways) offers greater flexibility than having dedicated rooms accessible only from one classroom. Where there is a greater level of need across a primary school, a whole range of support spaces may be required. Some primary schools may have specialist SEN spaces (such as a speech and language therapy room) to support a particular need. Additional space may be needed for making and storing resources for supporting children with visual impairment – such as large print books, embossing, and specialist ICT. Typically, the total area required for SEN support facilities may be 75–150m². The School has a SEN Intervention Room.
- 14.7**



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- Building Bulletin 99: Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects (2006) lists the following that need to be allowed for in an inclusive mainstream primary school: multi-purpose small group rooms; a medical and therapy room for peripatetic staff and health professionals; an interview room for parents; accessible toilets and hygiene facilities; storage space for educational and mobility equipment and classrooms large enough to allow movement for disabled pupils. The recommended total net area includes a 'float', which can be used to provide extra space. Where there is a significant number of children with SEN and disabilities, an overall area greater than in Building Bulletin 99 may be required – <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sbareguidelines/>
- 14.8**

- Some primary age children with SEN and disabilities need more support and spend most of their time in a designated unit, where they learn strategies to help them access the curriculum in mainstream classes. They may be included in the mainstream school for some social and curricular activities, depending on their individual needs. The unit typically supports between 10 and 16 children with a particular SEN (although this can vary significantly locally). Typical accommodation may comprise:
- one class base per key stage for timetabled use with children in small groups of up to 8–10, for a full range of curricular and support activities
 - two small-group/quiet rooms per key stage – smaller room(s) for individuals or very small groups, larger room(s) for bigger groups, role play and activity
 - specialist space(s) relating to children's specific SEN, such as for learning aids and preparation, storage of resources, and mobility equipment
 - space(s) for practical work
 - support, social and staff space(s)
- Depending on numbers and range of need, the total area for a designated unit may be 200–400m².
- 14.9**

- The classroom is the most common type of room in a School building. An appropriate classroom environment is important for successful teaching and learning and for ensuring that all students can participate equally in classroom activities. It is important that all students can circulate freely around the classroom, and can access storage areas, equipment, sinks, sockets, and so on. The provision of ample space and level access is important for those using assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, crutches or canes. Worktops and sinks should have knee space underneath to allow a wheelchair user to use them comfortably. Anti glare film is recommended on windows in areas which visually impaired children use frequently. This is due to photosensitivity further reducing vision, ability to judge speed and distance and also causing eye pain and headaches.
- 14.10**

- Students with emotional, psychological or mental health issues may need more space around them, or they may need access to quiet rooms to allow them to refocus. In some cases, they may need spaces that allow for engagement with a number of adults at one time. Appropriate use of lighting and colour can help to create a calming environment. Students who have intellectual or learning disabilities will benefit from a design approach that reduces visual and auditory distractions. Distractions can arise from other students passing through nearby corridors, or from noisy sports or music activities, or from external distractions, such as buses or grass cutting.
- 14.11**

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- Students who have difficulties with remembering and concentrating will also benefit from reduced distractions. They may need access to assistive technology (such as a laptop computer with specialist software) to help them to manage their learning processes. Students who have speech disabilities may need alternative ways to communicate with their teachers and their peers. Classrooms designed to facilitate the use of computers with assistive technology can be very helpful in meeting and supporting these needs. Requirements include appropriate desk space, power points, and network connectivity (fixed or wireless). A suitable acoustic environment that avoids or reduces noise distractions will also be helpful.
- 14.12**

- The acoustics in classrooms are important, as children have proven that poor acoustics will make it more difficult for all pupils to understand the teachers voice and may actually shorten attention span. For deaf or hard of hearing pupils, this will be particularly the case, with room acoustics having a significant effect on that pupils ability to hear and understand the teacher. Whilst the SEN framework may provide auxiliary aids to help deaf or hard of hearing pupils to communicate with the teacher, good room acoustics will greatly assist this and may even prevent the need for such aids in the first place. In practical terms, using soft furnishings, carpets, or sound-absorbing notice boards may help to reduce the reverberation time in a classroom. Where sound-absorbing floor and wall finishes and fittings may not be appropriate for maintenance and durability reasons, providing a sound-absorbing ceiling may be more appropriate. It is recommended that classrooms should be carpeted, (not practical rooms).
- 14.13**

- In a School with a good acoustic environment, people will experience:
- good sound quality – enabling people to hear clearly, understand and concentrate on whatever activity they are involved in;
 - minimal disturbance from unwanted noise (such as from activities in adjacent areas, teaching equipment such as data projectors, ventilation fans or road traffic).
- In classrooms, class bases and other areas used for teaching, this will allow teachers to communicate without straining their voices. In some types of spaces, such as music rooms, recording studios, open-plan areas and rooms where pupils with hearing impairment are taught, there are additional requirements that may require higher acoustic standards than those for normal class bases.
- 14.14**

- In complying with the School Premises Regulation on acoustics, regard should be had to Acoustic design of Schools (revised in 2012).
1. adequate sound insulation of internal walls and floors to minimise disturbance from sound generated in adjacent areas;
 2. appropriate reverberation times (RT) to suit the teaching and other activities planned to take place in each space. Reverberation time measures how 'echoey' a particular room is. A relatively short RT is needed in most teaching and learning spaces not only to ensure that speech, including teachers' voices, is clearly heard and understood, but also to control the build-up of occupancy speech noise. Some spaces, for example some types of music room, require a longer RT;
- 14.15**

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3. suitable indoor ambient noise levels to enable clear communication. Suitable indoor ambient noise levels will vary depending on the activity taking place. Some noise sensitive activities, such as listening to music or learning a language, are less tolerant of background noise, as are rooms used for teaching pupils with hearing impairment and some other special educational needs; and

4. adequate speech intelligibility in open plan areas to avoid disturbance from adjacent activities and to ensure that the wanted speech can be understood.

- 14.16 Soundfield systems may offer some benefit to students with mild hearing loss who don't use hearing aids. The classroom will be fitted with speakers in the ceiling or walls to ensure that the teacher's voice is heard clearly throughout the classroom. Soundfield systems differ from traditional public address systems by making the sound clearer, not louder. Portable soundfield systems are available that can be moved between classrooms as required.

14.17 In existing Schools, management solutions can help to reduce problematic background noise and improve acoustics. Solutions include keeping windows closed; using window blinds; putting rubber caps on chair legs; and using soft materials on walls, ceilings and other hard surfaces to reduce echo. Tablecloths, mobiles hanging from the ceiling, and wall displays using soft materials can all help to reduce echo. If these management solutions are not sufficient, expert advice should be sought in relation to the installation of suitable sound insulation.

14.18 All schools must have a designated space for visiting medical staff and the treatment and care of children. There also needs to be somewhere for first aid emergencies and where a sick person can be closely supervised by a member of staff 32. In mainstream schools, a space of 12–18m² may be suitable as a medical room that might also be used for therapy, as long as first aid emergencies can be dealt with in, say, a sick bay elsewhere. If a greater level of support is required (likely in many special schools), a medical room of 15–25m² is recommended. The medical room(s) should be close to other therapy facilities. Some schools have a suite of rooms with toilet and changing facilities close by. There must be easy access for emergency services and enough circulation space for larger wheelchairs and trolleys. There are first aid areas around the School and a Medical Room.



There also needs to be:

- window and door security (to protect medicines and confidential records)
 - non-abrasive wall surfaces
 - and slip resistant floor surfaces that are easy to clean and maintain for good standards of hygiene
- 14.19 appropriate furniture and equipment, such as a desk and chairs, an adjustable couch, a treatment trolley, a filing cabinet and lockable cupboard and/or fridge for drugs, wash-hand basin, some soft furnishings and shelves

- 14.20 There has been a programme of continuous growth and improvement and updating of classrooms and facilities in the School and this is ongoing. The School has put much thought into accessibility. They have made many improvements to access to their site for pupils with mobility difficulties or wheel chair users. They are constantly reviewing this situation.

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At Sacred Heart, they believe that all children have an entitlement to a broad and balanced academic and social curriculum, which is accessible to them, and to be fully included in all aspects of School life. The curriculum is not only the subjects on the timetable, but all other learning experiences students encounter whilst at school. These include activities, competitions, visits, speakers, team games, opportunities to learn musical instruments, opportunities to take on responsibilities, etc. Full details of the curriculum and all subjects which are taught can be found on school web site.

14.21

Our Mission - "We believe that God's spirit is at work in everyone in our community. We will provide an environment of hope, joy and fulfilment in which the skills to fulfil God's desires for us, as unique individuals, are cultivated." At Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy, they believe that children can develop as a person through prayer and prayer is turning their attention to God. It is raising their minds and hearts to God. It is putting ourselves in His presence and so their starting point for prayer is the place where we find God. The School is both a place of prayer and worship. The School mission is lived out every minute of every day in classrooms, in the staffroom, in the playground and of course, during Liturgies and mass.

14.22



In the School, there are tidy, well maintained classrooms with bright cheerful displays which celebrate pupil's work. All departments provide a well-resourced and stimulating learning environment. The classrooms are carpeted.

Furniture layouts in the classrooms have been carefully planned to ensure space at the entrance and access to key facilities such as the whiteboard, storage areas, and practical zones. An 1800mm turning space at these areas has been maintained and a preferred circulation width of 1200mm for movement between them. A minimum of 900mm circulation width is available on all routes. This space is based on the requirements of wheelchair users, but will also benefit a range of other users.

14.23



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- Visual timetables are in use in some of the classrooms. A visual timetable or timeline uses pictures to break down steps of a task or a routine throughout the day. It is like us using a diary, following a recipe or making a list using pictures instead of words. Visual timelines can help children in lots of different ways: Children with difficulty understanding language may benefit from visual timelines because of the extra time they allow them to think. When we talk our words disappear quickly and children have to remember and work out what we have said. As pictures don't disappear, your child can look at them and take in the information at their own pace. Visual timelines can also help support any child who is anxious, perhaps because they are going somewhere or doing something new, or don't understand routines. They are reassuring for children who need to know what is going to happen next in a task or routine so that they can anticipate this. Many children learn better when they have pictures to help them. Lots of children are visual learners which means they learn by seeing things rather than listening.
- 14.24**

- While spending time with schools over the last few years, I'm delighted to see so many brilliant Working Walls in use. At Sacred Heart, they are innovative and interactive. There is more to 'working walls' than you might think - with a little ingenuity, teachers can use them for any subject and age group. Fully inclusive classroom environments can both support and enrich the learning of all children. As well as being vibrant and welcoming, the classroom environment can be a learning tool, a way of engaging children and building the class community. It can create a sense of ownership and be used to support and promote learning as well as celebrating children's work. With careful thought and planning, an effective classroom environment is used as an interactive resource supporting teaching, learning and assessment. The classroom environment is one of the most potent teaching aids in our class. It should be visually stimulating and lively and should help to develop and engage children's learning. All classroom environments should provide the following at an appropriate level for the age of the children working in the classroom (List A). List B represents what is desirable. Although it is extremely important that our classrooms remain individual (who wants to see classrooms that look the same?).
- 14.25**



- Well planned working walls can:
- Support independent working and learning: think of the Working Wall as an extra adult in the classroom. It can help support children who become stuck and direct children to new tasks when they have self-assessed that they have successfully finished an activity.
- Support whole class and guided group teaching: models and images, key vocabulary and useful prompts are displayed and referred to by the teacher to support children in their understanding.
- 14.26**



Celebrate success in Mathematics/Literacy: examples of successful work and photographs of children working successfully should be displayed to show that work in Mathematics/Literacy is valued, and to support learning. It is also a good idea to allow children to make contributions to the wall; post-it notes are an ideal resource for this.

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Lighting has a significant impact on the ability of students to concentrate and learn in comfort. Controllable lighting systems, which can increase or decrease light levels in particular parts of the classroom, are very helpful for students with disabilities. It is important that lighting levels are reasonably consistent, so students do not experience wide variations in light levels when moving their vision from their own desk to the teacher. Lighting should take into account the different needs of all students. Students with vision loss need good lighting levels to enhance their sight, and may require additional lighting for certain tasks. Deaf and hard-of-hearing students need clear visibility for lip-reading. Some students may be particularly sensitive to glare. Therefore, it is important to be able to control the sunlight entering a space by installing suitable blinds. Blinds and curtains in classrooms have been installed to reduce glare. (Important for lip-reading) Individual adaptations are made at Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy for specific pupils e.g. chair supports and individual work stations where necessary.



14.27



The Internet is an essential element for education, business and social interaction. Internet use is a part of the statutory curriculum and a necessary tool for staff and pupils, and so the School has a duty to provide pupils with quality Internet access as part of their learning experience: ICT is made easy and fun in classrooms equipped with the latest interactive technology which encourages students to search, explore, investigate and make decisions using ICT. Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy has laptop trolleys and also have desktop PCs around the school to help with ICT and other related activities.

14.32



Additionally all classrooms have internet access. Technology is used as a resource and learning tool. It prepares children for life in the environment beyond School. The School is fortunate in being able to provide a wide range of ICT opportunities. Many of their classrooms have interactive whiteboards. These allow teachers access to an enormous range of resources to enliven and support their teaching. Specialist software makes it possible to create flipcharts, whilst internet links enable photographs and video clips to be included. The boards can also be used for subject based software, giving the children opportunities to support their learning in a fun and interactive way. Internet access makes researching topics easy for both children and adults. Internet access is always under supervision and sites used closely monitored. County server software filters sites and blocks inappropriate use. The children are taught the need for safe and sensible use of internet resources. ICT provision is continually being considered and improved to enable Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy to keep up to date with fast changing technological developments. All of their teachers and learning support assistants have received training to ensure that the children receive the highest possible quality teaching and learning in ICT.

14.33



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14.34

The PE department aims to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, with equal opportunity and provision for all. The PE and Sports Premium grant has been allocated to schools to effectively improve PE and sport provision. The funding is used at Sacred Heart to ensure impact against the following 5 key indicators: The engagement of ALL pupils in regular physical activity-kick starting healthy active lifestyles, The profile of PE and sport being raised across the school as a tool for whole school improvement. To increase confidence, knowledge and skills of all staff in teaching PE and sport, To broaden experiences of a range of sports and activities offered to all pupils and to increase participation in competitive sport

A well-designed library can enhance learning. Children may use computers along with other access technology there, such as Braille readers, touch screens, audio visual or video display and learning resource packs, with toys and reference objects. Shelves and search systems should be at an appropriate height for access by younger children and wheelchair users. The learning environment should be comfortable and there may be informal seating, such as bean bags. If the library opens onto a circulation area, it must be sited to avoid disruption since some children with SEN can be disturbed or distracted easily. As with all open plan spaces, security, fire and acoustics issues will also need to be resolved.



14.36

The Equality Act 2010 states that as well as there being access to the School building and to the curriculum, all children should have access to the written word. Pupils need to develop appropriate learning strategies and become independent and lifelong learners. School libraries are the cornerstone to this process. Libraries empower pupils, not only by supporting the teaching and learning in the School, but by giving them the freedom to make their own choices about reading and learning experiences. The School does not have a Library but has reading comers in the classrooms which provides a mixture of resource books and fiction.



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14.37

There is a large school hall and a Canteen which is used for a variety of purposes. For more information on audience and spectator facilities (make reference to good practice guides 4.11 A.D.M for sports facilities). The following are AD M recommendations: The route to wheelchair spaces should be accessible. Stepped access required fixed handrails (see 1.34 – 1.37 A.D.M). Minimum numbers of permanent & removable spaces (see table 3 plus diagram 13 A.D.M). Provide a range of views of event. Access to podium or stage for wheelchair via ramp or lifting platform to be provided. Hearing enhancement system to be provided (see 4.36 A.D.M). Minimum clear space for access to wheelchair spaces / space to be allowed for wheelchair to be 900mm wide by 1400mm deep & floor space should be horizontal.

Consider installing Hearing enhancement system.

B

M



14.38

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy provides coat hooks for storage of pupils' personal belongings. Children with mobility difficulties can sometimes have difficulties using lockers or cloakrooms. Problems can arise with:

- the height of coat hooks
- the type of lock used on the locker
- the capacity of the locker to store mobility aids or assistive technology
- the space available around the locker. If you admit a visually impaired pupil, we suggest they be offered an end locker/coat hook at an independently accessible height.

Keep cloakroom floors clear of trip hazards.

A

N

Internal Stairs, Steps and Ramps

15.1

The design for internal stairs, steps and ramps is the same as the external stair dimensions. see previous notes which also apply to handrails. **Steps** 12 risers maximum to a landing, but exceptionally no more than 16 in small premises where plan area is restricted. Rise of between 150mm and 170mm and going at least 250mm. (150mm max rise / min 280mm going for schools). No need for tactile warnings as external stairs. Provide guarding under landings less than 2100mm to prevent visually impaired walking into them.

15.2

Ramps Where the change in level is more than 300mm – 2 or more clearly signposted steps must be provided in addition to ramp. Where the change in level is less than 300mm – a ramp is to be provided instead of a single step. All landings to be level – subject to a max 1 in 60 gradient along their length. Provide guarding under landings less than 2100mm to prevent visually impaired walking into them.

15.3

The school has internal staircases. All of the steps have nosings. The treads and risers on the stairs are all the same height. The lighting on the stairs is free of shadows and when measured a maintained illuminance of 100 lux was achieved. With nosings, the aim should be to ensure there is a good contrast with Stair Nosing on the steps – at least creating a positive ladder effect in order to clearly identify each step.



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The stairs with over three risers at Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy have handrails.



15.4

Internal doors

According to AD M Doors to have maximum opening force at leading edge of 20N.

Door furniture to be easily operated by a closed fist, visually apparent i.e. contrasting with door surface and not cold to touch. Door clear width measured from handle to jamb. Varies according to angle of approach. Straight approach to door – 800mm clear width / right angle approach to door with access route min 1500mm - 800mm clear width / right angle approach to door with access route min 1200mm - 825mm clear width and doors and side panels to doors wider than 450mm to have vision panels provided – visibility zone between 500mm and 1500mm and if necessary interrupted between 800mm and 1150mm above floor level e.g. to accommodate an intermediate horizontal rail. Unobstructed 300mm min space on door pull side between door leading edge and wall (not to powered doors).

16.1

Door frames to contrast surrounding wall surfaces. Manifestation at two levels, 850mm to 1000mm and 1400mm to 1600mm. Glass doors in glass façade to have 150mm high contrast strip at door edges, and door protection if capable of being left open. Manifestations should visually contrast inside and out and in all lighting conditions. Fire doors self-closing either fitted with hold open devices or free swing devices and close on activation of the fire alarm (to negate requirement for 20N opening force).

16.2

Classroom doors in the School are wide enough and all desks and chairs are moveable allowing a wheelchair user to be fully inclusive. No unnecessary doors were identified during the survey and doors are suitably contrasted against their surroundings. According to BS 8300 - Colour and luminance contrast should be used to distinguish the boundaries of floors, walls, doors and ceilings, e.g. if the architrave is the same colour as the door but a different colour from the surrounding wall, it may outline the opening for some visually impaired users when the door is open.

16.3

They are all distinguishable from their surroundings. Internal doors require a strip or sign at 900mm to 1500mm if they are glazed.

16.4

The glass doors were clearly visible when closed.

16.5

A door opening of 750mm minimum is required to all internal doors and the openings of the doors are sufficient width for wheelchair users in the School.

16.6

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- 16.7 There is adequate space alongside the leading edge of the doors for a wheelchair user to pass through. A space of 300 mm should be provided alongside the leading edge of the door to enable wheelchair users to reach the handle. The Department of the Environment Part M Technical Guidance Document notes the importance of a 'leading edge' at every door. This is "an unobstructed space of at least 300mm between the leading edge of a single leaf door (when it opens towards you) and a return wall, unless the door is opened by remote automatic control. This enables a person in a wheelchair to reach and grip the door handle, then open the door without releasing hold on the handle and without the footrest colliding with the return wall".

- 16.8 All the door closers are BS compliant.

Doors which are propped open require well contrasting markings along their narrow edges. On predominantly glass doors, put a contrasting label or poster on them which will give a visual clue and help with the warning of the approaching hazard and judgement of distance. Ensure that fire doors are not propped open under any circumstances. Propped open doors should be marked with well contrasting markings along their narrow edges. Label glass doors with posters or decorative designs. Ensure that fire doors are not propped open under any circumstances.

16.9

Doors present some of the most common accessibility issues. They may be too "heavy" and require too much force to open. Heavy doors are especially difficult for people with disabilities and seniors with limited upper body strength and/or skills in using their hands. They may close too quickly for some people to pass through easily. People who move slowly or use mobility devices like wheelchairs or walkers may not be able to pass through fast enough. Luckily, these common problems can often be resolved by simply adjusting door closers.

16.10



- 16.11 Where needed, doors have been fitted with vision panels so people can see each other either side of the doors. Ensure that the vision panels are not obstructed in any way.

Remove any posters etc. covering the vision panels.

A

N



WC's General Provision

- 17.1 ADM recommend: Bath and washbasin taps & door opening furniture capable of being operated using a closed fist e.g. lever action or lever handles. Visual contrast as follows: a) door furniture and door surface b) door frame and surrounding wall c) sanitary fittings/grab bars and wall and floor finishes d) wall and floor finishes. Light action privacy bolts designed for lack of manual dexterity and self-closers to doors – 20N max force. Doors to have a release mechanism capable of being opened outward in an emergency. Outward opening doors not to obstruct emergency escape routes. Fire alarms to emit a visual and audible signal. An emergency assistance alarm system operable from seated position to be provided. Alarm to sound different than fire alarm. Heat emitters screened or to have surfaces below 43 degrees Celsius. W.C. pans should accommodate variable height toilet seat risers. Cistern flushing mechanism positioned on open or transfer side.
- 17.2 Suitable toilet and washing facilities must be provided for the sole use of pupils, having regard to their age, number, sex and any special requirements they may have. Where the facilities are for disabled pupils, they may also be used by staff and visitors who are disabled. The Education (School Premises) Regulations stipulate that there should be at least one toilet for every 10 pupils under five years and one for every 20 pupils over that age. In special Schools, the minimum provision is one toilet for every 10 pupils, irrespective of age. Staff toilets must be separate from those for pupils. Whilst the number of toilets for staff must be "adequate", the regulations do not specify a minimum provision.
- 17.3 Schools must have separate toilet facilities for male and female pupils aged 8 or over. Exceptions may be made for facilities for disabled users and for unisex toilets - those which are designed to be used by one person at a time and have doors that can be secured from the inside. If toilets are poor in Schools, children are reluctant to use them, with many trying to hold on all day until they get home.
- 17.4 Controls in toilet facilities should be easy to understand and use. Door handles, cubicle latches, taps, and flushing mechanisms should be operable with a closed fist. The operation of these items should be uncomplicated. For the visually impaired person it is very important that fittings and items of equipment are well contrasted against their background so that they can be readily identified. When fittings such as basins, hand dryers etc. are poorly contrasted this can make it very difficult for the visually impaired person to use the toilet.
- 17.5 The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 cover the supply of toilets and washing facilities for staff. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has a code of practice based on the law that explains the full requirements. Employers should arrange for separate facilities for men and women. If this isn't possible, toilets and washing facilities must have locks. These ensure privacy and security. The locks and handles must be simple to use. Toilets and washing facilities for staff may also be used by visitors. They should be separate from those provided for pupils, except where they are designed for use by those who are disabled.



- 17.6 Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy meets the required criteria for provision of toilets. All the toilets have slip resistant floors throughout.



- 17.7 Push button taps or lever taps are more suitable in wash rooms. The best taps on wash basins are non-concussive taps, which are self-closing taps. The main difference between self-closing taps and other taps is the fact that they turn themselves off after a set period of time. It also reduces the risk of people leaving the tap on and flooding the area. For the visually impaired person it is very important that fittings and items of equipment are well contrasted against their background so that they can be readily identified. When fittings such as basins, hand dryers etc. are poorly contrasted this can make it very difficult for the visually impaired person to use the toilet. All the taps in the washroom facilities in the School are push button or lever taps.

- 17.8 Most disabled toilet users, and certain mobility impaired users will require additional space and equipment in order to be able to transfer onto and off a WC pan. Without the extra space and equipment it will prove completely impossible for disabled person to use the toilet. Therefore it is clearly discriminatory to provide standard toilets without providing an accessible alternative.

WC's Provision for Disabled Users

A.D.M recommend: **Wheelchair accessible unisex toilet provision**

- 18.1 One located near to entrance and/or waiting area in a building. Not located in a way that compromises privacy of users. Located in similar position of each floor of a multi-storey building with choice of transfer layouts on alternate floors. Choice of transfer layouts when more than one unisex toilet is available. Where w.c. is the only one in a building the width must be increased to 2000mm to accommodate an additional standing w.c. Located on accessible routes that are direct and obstruction free. 40m maximum travel distance to an accessible toilet. Travel between floors restricted to one floor if a lifting platform is only provided. Doors to outward open – with horizontal closing bar to rear. Heat emitters not to restrict wheelchair manoeuvring space or space beside w.c.

- 18.2 **Toilets in separate sex washrooms** Ambulant disabled people should be able to use a w.c. compartment within any separate sex toilet washroom. 450mm diameter manoeuvring space is provided in cubicle between door swing and edge of pan. Minimum dimensions of compartments for ambulant disabled people. Compartment doors for ambulant disabled people preferably open outward. One low level washbasin and urinal with vertical grab bars.

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Ideally an accessible toilet should be provided wherever standard toilets are fitted but this may not always be practical or reasonable.

Each toilet for disabled pupils should contain one toilet and one washbasin, and possibly a shower or other wash down fitting, and have a door opening directly onto a circulation space (other than a staircase) which can be secured from the inside.

- 18.3** Where possible, the number and location of accessible toilets should be sufficient to ensure a reasonable travel distance for users, avoiding changing floor levels. As a guide, a maximum travel distance of 20-25 metres is recommended for Schools. (The Education Act 1996 places a duty on the Secretary of State to prescribe standards for the premises of all maintained Schools in England and Wales. The previous standards were set out in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (SPRs) and they applied to all existing and new Schools maintained by a local authority.)

- 18.4** The minimum accessible toilet provision usually includes providing larger-than-standard-sized cubicles with grab rails in separate sex washrooms for ambulant people with disabilities. It also includes providing separate unisex wheelchair-accessible toilets. Unisex accessible toilets are designed with extra space and fittings to allow for independent use by wheelchair users. These are also commonly used by people with other mobility disabilities and vision loss. Providing a unisex cubicle with separate access allows for assistance to be provided by an assistant of either gender.

- 18.5** Controls in accessible toilet facilities should be easy to understand and use. Door handles, cubicle latches, taps, and flushing mechanisms should be operable with a closed fist. The operation of these items should be uncomplicated. Fittings should contrast with the wall colour.

- 18.6** The hand washing and drying facilities should all be within easy reach of someone seated on the WCs. A person should be able to wash their hands before transferring back on the wheelchair from the WC. The basin fittings should all be suitable for people who cannot grip. There needs to be coated grab rails and hand rails and a rail on the back of the doors. Disabled toilets should not be used for storage as this will prevent manoeuvring of wheelchairs into position for frontal, lateral, angled and backward transfer both unassisted and assisted.



- 18.7** Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy has one disabled toilet. The alarm cord was tied up on the day of the audit. The bin is too close to the toilet and would impede access.

Ensure that the alarm cable is not tied up, fit coat hooks and move the bin.

B

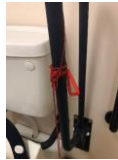
M



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18.8 The toilet door is signed.



18.9

Toilets should have emergency call systems within easy reach of the toilets. A pull cord or a switch with large push pads is recommended and it needs to be signed 'pull in case of emergency'. Your toilet is fitted with an alarm which is best practice but the alarm was tied up on the day of the audit. You should appreciate that whoever responds to the alarm maybe faced with a rather sensitive situation and may also be required to lift a relatively heavy person back onto the WC pan or chair. Therefore you should firstly have a procedure set down for responding to these alarms. Whoever it is charged with responding to the alarm should receive disability awareness and etiquette training and some form of basic manual handling training.

Ensure the alarm cord in the accessible toilet is of a suitable length and ask cleaning staff to ensure that the cord is kept hanging free.

A/B N/M

Arrange disability awareness and etiquette training and some form of basic manual handling training for appointed members of staff if not already done.

18.10

The location of the disabled toilet should be clearly signed. As a result of their condition or injuries a number of disabled people will have incontinence issues. As a result it is very important that the accessible toilet can be quickly and easily located. Most of your pupils should be able to familiarise themselves with toilet positions but this will not be the case for visitors so it is recommended that the position of the visitor's accessible toilet is well signed. The toilet is in the main Reception area and is easily visible to a visitor.

18.11

The Disabled toilet in Reception requires a coat hook. This is a minor item but we do recommend that coat hooks at 1400mm and 1050mm above floor level are made available to wheelchair users and an ambulant disabled person.

Ensure that the coat hooks are at a suitable height, in the accessible toilet, so that they can be easily reached by a person in a wheelchair.

B M

Kitchen and Dining Area, Staffroom

19.1

Where dining, eating or food preparation facilities are provided; care should be taken to ensure that all students and staff members can safely and independently use the facility. Dining environments should not be viewed as purely functional but should be structured to facilitate social interaction and inclusion with peers. • Tables should be accessible to wheelchair users • Aisles should be wide enough to allow students carrying trays to safely pass • Self-service shelves and dispensers for cutlery and condiments should be within reach of wheelchair users and people of small stature. • Tray slides allow trays to be rested while moving along a counter. These should be continuous to reduce the chances of dropping trays, and have knee space underneath to accommodate wheelchair users

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19.2

The biggest issue in many dining areas in schools is the acoustics – lots of hard finishes can create considerable echo, which is very difficult for people with sensory impairments. Introducing some soft finishes, such as chairs or screens with fabric, curtains etc., will help a little. Refreshment areas have similar needs to reception waiting areas in terms of a mix of seating styles. If all chairs are without arm supports, consider changing some for sturdy chairs with arm supports. If your tables and chairs are fixed, these will be quite difficult for many disabled pupils to access and it would be beneficial to supplement or exchange one or two fixed units with some freestanding tables and chairs. This offers flexibility for all needs. Ensure aisles between tables are kept clear – at least one aisle should be wide enough for a wheelchair user to turn (1500mm width needed), and the under table clearance height should be at least 700mm for comfortable wheelchair access.



19.3

Whilst ideally serving counter heights should not be too high (850mm recommended), this can be overcome by someone else bringing items to the table. This is a recommendation anyway for items where it would be difficult or potentially dangerous for a physically disabled person to carry (for example hot drinks). The variety of food available should ideally include some finger food items. Have straws readily available for use with hot and cold drinks. Plain crockery is easier for someone with a visual impairment, but must contrast from the tables on which they will be placed. A mix of cups with and without handles is also useful. Menus should be displayed in a large print, easy read format. A few schools might use a venue with a vending machine. Assistance can be provided to operate the machine if needed, especially if the coin slot is too high or the dispenser too low. Braille tape could be added to the selection panel if a need is identified and there are also self-adhesive labels called “bump-ones” available in an assortment of colours, shapes and texture that can be added to particular products.

19.4

The government have issued new food-based standards that have been introduced both at lunchtimes and at break times for Schools and the new standards have made much clearer what Schools can and cannot provide for their children in School. December 2014 saw the introduction of the new food legislation. The regulations place a new requirement on those selling or serving food. The EU law has listed 14 allergens that need to be identified if they are used in ingredients in a dish. The listed allergens are celery, cereals containing gluten, crustaceans, eggs, fish, lupin, milk, molluscs, mustard, nuts, peanuts, sesame seeds, soya, sulphur dioxide.

19.5

Sacred Heart School offer varied menus using fresh U.K. meats, fresh salads and fresh vegetables every day from their local suppliers. All meals are made on site with fresh ingredients. Their school dinners are packed with fresh and tasty ingredients which meet many strictly regulated food assurance schemes. The School has a Healthy School Award. Parents may wish to take advantage of the provision of hot meals at lunchtime; these will be prepared on site. There is also provision for pupils to eat packed lunches brought from home.

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19.7

At its most basic, every School is required by law to provide essential amenities such as toilets, wash stations and clean drinking water for staff. Most employees also hope to find additional facilities such as a cloakroom and somewhere clean to eat and drink during breaks. Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy provides a well equipped staff room. There are washing facilities for staff and a means of heating food or water for hot drinks. The staff room size is determined by the total number of staff who use it at the same time, the frequency of use and the number of meetings held there. Large meetings tend to take place in a separate space. There need to be workstations, notice boards, book/magazine shelves, audio-visual facilities with blinds and blackout.

A separate resource and preparation area for teaching and support staff to plan and prepare programmes of work is usually located with other staff rooms, its size governed by the number of staff and the need for visiting teachers to store equipment and resources associated with their professional roles.

Provide a high backed chair with arms in the Staffroom.

A

M

Access to the Curriculum

The following is considered good practice:

- Develop effective classroom partnerships by differentiating the learning objectives and outcomes, ensuring all staff are fully briefed and can adjust the lesson to meet the needs of individual pupils. This partnership should be underpinned by encouraging independence amongst pupils.
- Develop a whole school approach that raises the capability of all school staff to assist in the teaching of pupils with SEND in mainstream settings. In particular this approach should focus on ensuring school staff can provide care and support for vulnerable pupils, and know who to speak to find out more.
- Make SEND a priority by ensuring there is a member of the governing body, or a sub-committee, with specific oversight arrangements for SEN and disability. This should include regular reviews between the Headteacher, SENCO and the governing body on how resources are being allocated and the impact of this allocation.

20.1

Ensuring access to the curriculum is vital in providing equal opportunities to children and young people with SEND. Considerable progress has been made to improve the accessibility of the curriculum, covering both teaching and learning, as well as Early Years, trips and visits, after school activities and extended school activities in our schools.

20.2

Schools and educational settings (including Early Years) are responsible for providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils and play a key role in planning to increase access to the curriculum for all pupils. Therefore schools are required to have in place an 'Accessibility Plan' that demonstrates what actions the school is taking to increase access to the curriculum, particularly for those pupils with SEND.

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- Adjustments that would help children with disabilities have better access to the curriculum might include:
changes to teaching and learning arrangements, classroom organisation and timetabling.
Technology suited to a child's needs can help them learn faster and more easily. This can increase their access to the curriculum. Examples of technology that can help include:
touch-screen computers, joysticks and trackballs, easy-to-use keyboards, interactive whiteboards, text-to-speech software, Braille-translation software, software that connects words with pictures or symbols.
- 20.3** Some schools may already have this kind of technology available, or may be planning to get it. Arrangements for distributing resources and funding for equipment vary throughout the UK. If a pupil has a statement of special educational needs, the help that is detailed on their statement (which may include special equipment) must be provided.
- By the time children reach secondary school, their special needs are likely to have been identified and the most suitable provision decided upon. Nevertheless, this is still a significant time of transition for them, and consequently an anxious time for some. The general provision made in mainstream secondary spaces will be able to meet the needs of some children with SEN and disabilities but additional support facilities will be required in some cases. Some children benefit from the extra support and stability of resourced provision or a designated unit, with flexible arrangements for them to be included in the main school. Some need the additional support of a special school.
- 20.4**
- It is the philosophy, policy and practice of the School to include all pupils in the National Curriculum. Therefore, regardless of their ability, they will have access to all areas of the curriculum and adjustments made where necessary to enable them to be included. In order to meet children's individual needs within the framework of the National Curriculum, collaborative planning between all those working with the child is essential and where pupils are withdrawn for additional support, they will still follow the National Curriculum framework. They present positive images of disability. They try to integrate disability images into all aspects of work including classroom displays and where there is an absence in published materials they will comment and discuss. They ensure the images in text books, wall displays, reading books, videos and films used in the School do not reinforce the negative stereotypes of disabled people. They challenge the questions of negative stereotypes as they arise. They are aware of the language they use and they will challenge language, which is offensive, derogatory or upsetting in any way. At Sacred Heart, they want to ensure that discussions and programmes of work involving aspects of disability and equality become an integral part of the curriculum.
- 20.5**

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20.6 All of their SEND children have access to before School, lunchtime and after School clubs at various stages, which develop engagement with the wider curriculum. Where it is necessary, the School will use the resources available to it to provide additional adult support to enable the safe participation of the pupil in the activity. They are proud of all their children, whatever their level of need or their attainment. They look at the progress of each child, not just in the academic subjects but in their confidence and ability to interact with others. They take note of the way they mature and how they communicate their feelings and needs. They want their children to leave them as articulate, well-mannered and sociable young people who can live in harmony and show tolerance in the wider world. They want them to know what will help them become successful learners so they can reach their potential, whatever that maybe and above all they want them to feel happy about what they can achieve and strive to do their best. All of the sports clubs are popular but many children enjoy the breakfast club and the Choir.

20.7 Almost a fifth of children in Britain are identified as having special educational needs (SEN). It is estimated that around 7 per cent of children are disabled and a significant number of children have both SEN and a disability. Most children with SEN and disabilities are educated in mainstream schools. Around one per cent of the total school population is educated in special schools. The Government wants to ensure that every child with SEN and disabilities gets an education that allows them to achieve their full potential. Where a child has SEN, a school's statutory duties include doing its best to ensure that the necessary provision is made for them and that they join in school activities with other pupils as much as possible.

20.8 Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005) (DDA) and now The Equality Act, every local authority, MAT and school must • not discriminate against disabled pupils – they must not treat them 'less favourably' and must actively make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that they are not at a substantial disadvantage. • plan strategically to increase access for disabled pupils to the curriculum, improving the physical environment so that disabled pupils can take advantage of the education and services offered, and improving information for disabled pupils – they need to show in their accessibility plans how they will do this. • promote equality of opportunity for disabled people with special educational needs.

20.9 The SEN Code of Practice stresses the importance of not assuming hard and fast categories of SEN. Each child is unique and there is a wide spectrum of special educational needs, although there are also specific needs that usually relate directly to particular types of impairment. Children with SEN and disabilities have needs and requirements which may fall into at least one of four areas: • Cognition and learning • Behavioural, emotional and social. Communication and interaction • Sensory and/or physical, Many children have inter-related needs. For example, a pupil with general learning difficulties may also have a sensory impairment. Disabled children, however, do not necessarily have SEN. The largest group of pupils who may count as disabled under the Equality Act but do not necessarily have SEN are those with particular medical conditions.

Cognition and learning

- 20.10 Children may demonstrate features of moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties or specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. Some may have associated sensory, physical and behavioural difficulties that compound their needs. Some may be on the autistic spectrum. Children who have these needs require specific strategies to help their learning and understanding. These may include strategies to support the development of language, literacy and organisational skills and practical sensory or physical experiences to support the development of abstract ideas and concepts.

Behaviour, emotional and social development

- 20.11 Children who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties may be withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing and they may be hyperactive. They may lack concentration and have immature social skills. Challenging behaviour may arise from other complex special needs. Children who have these needs may require a structured learning environment, with clear boundaries for each activity. They may need extra space to move around and to ensure a comfortable distance between themselves and others. They may take extreme risks or have outbursts and need a safe place to calm down. Behaviour support or counselling may take place in a quiet supportive environment.

Communication and interaction

- 20.12 Most children with special educational needs have strengths and difficulties in one, some or all of the areas of speech, language and communication. The range of difficulties will encompass children with a speech and language impairment or delay, children with learning difficulties, those with a hearing impairment and those who demonstrate features within the autistic spectrum. Children with these needs require support in acquiring, comprehending and using language, and may need specialist support, speech and language therapy or language programmes, augmentative and alternative means of communication and a quiet place for specialist work. Children with autistic spectrum disorder have difficulty interpreting their surroundings and communicating and interacting with others. They need an easily understood environment with a low level of distraction and sensory stimulus to reduce anxiety or distress. They may need a safe place to calm down.

- 20.13 Children with these needs require access to all areas of the curriculum and may use specialist aids, equipment or furniture. Many will need specialist support (for example mobility training or physiotherapy). Children with sensory impairments may need particular acoustic or lighting conditions. Some may need extra space and additional 'clues' to help them negotiate their environment independently.

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Children with physical disabilities may use mobility aids, wheelchairs, or standing frames, which can be bulky and require storage. Whether they are able to move around independently or need support, there should be sufficient space for them to travel alongside their friends. Accessible personal care facilities should be conveniently sited.

- 20.14** Pupils with a range of medical needs may count as disabled under the Equality Act and may or may not have accompanying special educational needs. They may need facilities where their medical or personal care needs can be met in privacy.

Children with SEN and disabilities should take part in learning activities appropriate to their age and phase of education, with activities and materials that may be 'differentiated', with tasks adapted for individuals. A range of teaching approaches and learning styles is used, along with a variety of activities, including academic, vocational, ICT (information and communication technology) and multi-sensory. Teaching and learning approaches vary and may involve thematic and cross-curricular work. For example, food technology may combine English, maths and science, as well as life skills and personal, social and health education. Access to outdoor learning is essential for science, physical education, sensory experiences and mobility training.

20.15

Learning social skills helps children with SEN and disabilities take a fuller part in daily life. Dining together is an integral part of their curriculum and some children have additional support for this. Promoting health and well-being is important – children with SEN and disabilities take part in physical exercise through games or sports (sometimes adapted to suit needs), adventure play and mobility training, as well as through recreational and social activities. Older children are likely to need access to careers advice and work related experiences. Some may follow vocational courses, which may be arranged at further education colleges or at other schools for part of the young person's timetable.

20.16

Children with SEN and disabilities in mainstream schools tend to be taught with their peers in groups of up to 30 with one teacher, depending on the children's age, needs and sometimes ability. There may also be small group and one-to-one work with support staff and/or specialist teachers. Where there are children in special classes or in special schools, group sizes (with one teacher) may range between, eight and 15 children with moderate needs, six and eight children with severe to profound needs and four and six children with profound needs only. Ways of grouping children also vary. Children with a wide range of SEN and disabilities can be grouped together if their needs allow it. But those with, for example, severe or profound learning difficulties, who need stimulation, are likely to be grouped separately from children with autism, who need low sensory stimulus. Children who are boisterous or aggressive, such as children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties attending a unit or special school, may be taught separately from those who are vulnerable

20.17

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- Teaching assistants and support staff work alongside the teacher with individual children or with groups, in the same room or a separate space. A SENCo (SEN Co-ordinator) supports children with SEN in a mainstream school. Visiting professionals, such as a speech and language therapist, may work with particular children. Some children have high level needs and require a great deal of assistance from a large number of support staff.
- 20.18** Extra learning support can be provided by reducing numbers in a class, by having specific groupings or settings within that class, or by working separately in small groups or one to one with extra staff.
- Behaviour support – for some children this is about learning to communicate and develop social skills. For others, it means support or counselling in a separate quiet space that has a balance between privacy and visibility for supervision.
- 20.19** • Learning aids, ICT and specialist furniture, fittings and equipment – a variety of learning tools and teaching resources, ICT (computers and access technologies), specialist aids and equipment are used, some of which are bulky. Children may need particular furniture, fittings and equipment, such as height adjustable workstations.
- Therapy – therapies such as speech and language therapy, physiotherapy or hydrotherapy are used, particularly in special schools. Drama, art, music and movement can also be used as therapy in addition to provision through the mainstream curriculum.
 - Multi-sensory stimulation – multisensory interactive work uses communication and language techniques, tactile and practical tasks, music and movement, specialist ICT, and light or sound technology or resources.
- 20.20** • Personal support and care – children with complex health needs may have medical, healthcare and/or social support from specialist support staff. Designs need to ensure they can be treated with dignity and respect, and enable support for their family and carers
- Space**
- Some children with SEN and disabilities need more space – for moving around for example (some with mobility aids), for using specialist equipment, for communicating, and for 'personal' space. There needs to be room for:
- safe vehicular movement (which could be considerable in a special school)
 - safe clearances around furniture and equipment, especially for wheelchair users
 - additional staff working in learning and support spaces
 - storage and use of (sometimes bulky) equipment and a wide range of teaching resources
- Sensory awareness**
- Designers should take account of the varying impact of a school's environment on children's sensory experience. For example, designers should consider:
- appropriate levels of glare-free controllable lighting
 - good quality acoustics, taking into account the needs of people with sensory impairments and/or communication and interaction needs
 - visual contrast and texture, which can be used for sensory wayfinding
 - reduced levels of stimuli, (for example, avoiding sensory overload for a child with autism) to provide a calming background to learning
 - sensory elements - using colour, light, sound, texture and aroma therapeutically, in particular for children with complex health needs
- 20.22**

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Enhancing learning

- 20.23 A well-designed environment enhances the educational experience for all children, including those with SEN and disabilities. Designers need to consider:
- teachers and children being able to communicate clearly
 - accessible workstations with space for learning aids and assistants alongside
 - furniture, fittings and equipment that support a range of learning and teaching styles
 - easy access to specialist ICT resources, personal belongings, aids and mobility equipment

Flexibility and adaptability

- 20.24 Schools need to be flexible for everyday use and adaptable over time to meet the current and future needs of children with SEN and disabilities. Approaches include:
- rationalising (non-specialist) spaces so their functions can change over time
 - having access to different sizes of space (possibly by moveable partitions) to suit different needs
 - being able to adjust the environment locally (for example, lighting) for a variety of learning needs
 - minimising fixed furniture, fittings and equipment to allow re-arrangement for different activities and changing needs
 - positioning structural elements and service cores (lifts, stairs and toilets or load-bearing walls) to allow future adaptation

Health and well-being

- 20.25 Schools should promote health and well-being, dignity and respect, creating pleasant, comfortable spaces for all. This means considering school life from the perspective of the child, taking into account:
- thermal comfort, particularly for people with limited mobility or those unable to communicate their needs
 - ventilation that provides good oxygen levels to avoid drowsiness or discomfort, without uncomfortable draughts
 - the need to minimise disturbance from sudden or background noise
 - accessible personal care facilities, provided at convenient intervals around the school and integrating them sensitively into the design
 - specialist medical and therapy facilities, designed to appropriate standards
 - hygiene and infection control (especially for children with lowered immunity) in relation to materials, ease of cleaning/maintenance and environmental services.

Safety and security

- 20.26 All children, including those with SEN and disabilities, need to feel safe and secure, supported in their progress to independence. Levels of security required will depend on early-stage risk assessments. Designers need to consider:
- good sight lines for passive supervision, particularly where inappropriate behaviour can occur and where activities involve risk
 - zoning to reflect different functions or users
 - minimising risk of harm, without restricting the development of life skills
 - security - preventing unauthorised access and exit without looking Institutional

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Sustainability

- It is vital to achieve a high quality of sustainable design. DFE's sustainability framework states that: 'By 2020 the Government would like all schools to be models of social inclusion, enabling all pupils to participate fully in school life, while instilling a long-lasting respect for human rights, freedoms, cultures and creative expression.' Schools should demonstrate the following:
- Social: having a fully inclusive and cohesive school community, with a positive relationship with the wider community and other services accessing the site
 - Economic: achieving value for money based on the whole-life cost of the building, bearing in mind the possible higher cost of meeting some of the needs of children with SEN and disabilities and disabled adults
 - Environmental: minimising any negative environmental impact and making good use of the site's microclimate and biodiversity, with efficient use of energy and resources, ensuring the needs of disabled people are not compromised.
- 20.27

Access

- An accessible environment helps children with SEN and disabilities take part in school activities alongside their peers. School designs should ensure:
- a simple, clear layout, easily understood by all users
 - accessible circulation routes, broad enough for people using wheelchairs or sticks
 - ergonomic details (such as door handles) that mean everyone can use them
 - means of escape designed to take account of disabled people
- 20.28

- At Sacred Heart they carefully design, plan and implement a curriculum which provides breadth for every pupil. The School believe that the mission of Sacred Heart Catholic Academy in educating children, is not simply to impart information or to provide training in skills intended to deliver some economic benefit to society; education is not and must never be considered as purely utilitarian. It is about forming the human person, equipping him or her to live life to the full – in short it is about imparting wisdom. All teaching and learning is focused on the uniqueness of each person made in God's image and likeness. Here is the development of understanding that God has placed a desire for happiness in every human person, and by God's gifts of reason and free will, human beings are capable of knowing and choosing good and rejecting all that is wrong. Through Christ the gift of eternal life is assured. Love of neighbour involves respect for the religious beliefs of other people, particularly other Christians and the main world religions.
- 20.29

- The School Curriculum priorities are: Aspirations- they aim to provide experiences which show children the wider range of possibilities available for their future. Initiative- they aim to offer experiences which help them to become independent and resourceful learners. Environment- they aim to provide experiences which help their pupils to value God's creation, on a local and global level They have embedded the wider curriculum so that it meets the requirements of their children in the light of the latest National Curriculum review. This exciting development includes a computing curriculum Purple Mash that will integrate new technologies, programming and media into school life. The School curriculum continues to ensure that their children's learning is both meaningful and benefits from a specific focus on the core.
- 20.30

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20.31 The wider curriculum is based around their Wordsmith English curriculum books. Children read the book in class and then complete lots of tasks which are linked to that theme. This enables children to make sense of topic areas, science themes etc. Their maths curriculum is based around White Rose maths. Ultimately, they believe that Primary education is not just about targets and results in league tables, nor is it simply a preparatory step for secondary school; it is much more than that. As a school they believe that by developing skills, knowledge and attitudes, their children will become individuals, who can access and enjoy learning throughout their lives. The School want children to have a memorable learning experience at Sacred Heart that encourages and inspires them to achieve their potential and fosters an attitude of "wanting to learn" as well as "needing to learn."

20.32 The School follow the Ruth Miskin scheme for teaching phonics from Foundation 1 onwards . In F1, F2, Year 1 and Year2 phonics is taught as a separate lesson and from Year 3 onwards, it is used as an intervention for children who need a bit more time to grasp the concepts.in Children are encouraged to love books and read for pleasure. With this in mind, children are given many opportunities throughout the day in which they can read, on their own, in a group or with the whole class. Reading at home is also crucial. This year, they have introduced the Accelerated Reader programme with years 2 to 6. With AR, children read a book and then take a comprehension quiz about it as soon as possible. This is all completed online and children are given regular feedback on how they have done. The programme also adds up how many words each child has read so far in the year. The School have a competition ongoing where they are waiting for our first 'Word Millionaire' to emerge- this person will be taken to a book shop and will be allowed to choose books which reach up to the top of their leg!!!! It's all very exciting

20.33 The SENCO Mrs James and the SEN team work in collaboration with both class teachers and preschool staff supporting them in differentiating the curriculum most effectively. They aim to identify, as early as possible, the children who need additional support and place them on the appropriate strand of the SEN code of practice. Identification is based on standardised and diagnostic assessments, teacher observations and parental concerns. At Sacred Heart they aim to provide an inclusive environment in which the learning achievements and well-being of every pupil matters. All children will have access to the curriculum, school life and adequate access to the premises irrespective of race, gender, or special need. They are committed to providing appropriate and high quality education and to raising the standards of attainment for all children including those with special educational needs (from entry into the Foundation Stage to Transitioning into year seven) within the context of an increasingly inclusive education system. The School offers full inclusion in the school clubs e.g. football, sports, choir and the breakfast club.

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Sacred Heart is an inclusive school that welcomes all who wish to attend whilst recognising some face barriers to attendance, participation and achievement. Sacred Heart strives to develop all of its children as confident, creative learners, growing in faith, developing respect for themselves and others with positive attitudes and the ambition to nurture their talents and use them well. The staff are led by an experienced SEN co-ordinator. Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy has an established S.E.N policy and adopts a 'whole School approach' to special educational needs. All staff work to ensure the inclusion of all pupils. Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy aims to be as inclusive as possible, with the needs of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) being

20.34 met in a main street setting wherever possible.

1. Communication and Interaction
2. Cognition and Learning
3. Social, Mental and Emotional Health
4. Sensory and/or Physical

Access to the Environment

Reasonable adjustments may be needed to ensure equal access to the environment, including the creation of safe spaces, calming areas, and individual workstations. Since September 2012 there has also been a requirement for educational settings to provide auxiliary aids for disabled pupils subject to the Reasonable Adjustment Duty.

21.1 Support services from health, social care and education services are available to advise educational settings about suitable and reasonable adaptations to the inside and outside environment to help include pupils with SEND (specifically those with sensory integration needs).

This access audit report includes the following topics: • Issues of physical space and how to reduce distractions. • Opportunities to present information visually. • Providing organisational strategies to complete activities. • Using visual structures to help with organisation, increase clarity and provide instruction. Communication and Interaction. Supporting transition arrangements for children as they move between different phases of education. • Carrying out specialist assessments and monitoring children's progress. • Provide on-going advice on how to meet the needs of individual children. • Provide specialist services to support schools in meeting the needs of pupils attending a mainstream school

21.2

Expectations of schools

Support pupils' understanding of the spoken word by using visual clues, gestures, illustrations, diagrams and the written word. • Modify adult language in terms of complexity, vocabulary, utterance, and speech. • Repeat instructions, and modify the instruction if required. • Teach strategies to pupils that support self-learning and self-help. • Identify key vocabulary of the curriculum and teach definitions and cueing sentences. • Support the organisation of language through visual imagery. • Provide written information in a straightforward style. • Ensure that details of homework are given in sufficient time to allow for understanding. • Support the development of conversational skills and other aspects of social communication.

21.3

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- Sensory/physical Needs** • Facilitate peer support for schools and parents to encourage support networks between schools, parents and voluntary agencies. • Facilitate multi-agency work including health and social care professionals, early intervention teams, sensory specialists and school staff. • Provide specialist equipment to support learning. • Ensure that all pupil coat pegs, drawers and furniture are at appropriate heights. • Sinks, taps and play equipment to be at a suitable height and suitable for pupils with poor motor skills. • Playground markings to promote appropriate motor planning games and route planning. • Handrails to be placed adjacent to steps. • Adjustable height furniture in science and technology rooms. Alternative means of access determined to avoid difficult steps. • Doorways to be wheelchair accessible.
- 21.4

- Fire doors to be suitable and accessible for physically impaired pupils.
 - Liaise with health authority staff when considering the height of any toilet aids and equipment that may be required.
- 21.5
- Ensure that any adaptations to toilet areas allow space for a changing bench and suitable storage areas.
 - All uneven surfaces on the premises to be monitored and repaired.
 - Any obstacles, steps or uneven surfaces that cannot be removed to be clearly marked.
 - The tread and riser of steps to be clearly marked with a contrasting colour.

Learning and development (including behaviour, social and emotional needs)

- Expectations of schools:
- When addressing communication needs, avoid asking pupils to read in public unless they are comfortable to do so, instead find an area of strength for them to demonstrate publicly.
 - Use a multi-sensory approach during lessons to maximise learning channels.
 - Carefully consider presentation of work sheets.
 - Provide pupils photocopies of key text to allow for highlighting.
- 21.6
- Regularly place the child in a group where they can contribute knowledge.
 - Ensure the work/materials suit the child's mental age, as well as reading age. Learning Support Assistants may be required.
 - Ensure adequate reinforcement/consolidation of reading and writing skills to the level of automaticity.

- Use colour and visual clues to support reinforcement.
 - Help the pupil organise themselves by developing visual timetables, prompts and structures to support their memory and routines.
 - Use alternative methods for recording content, specifically methods that support revision.
 - Use positive feedback when marking work, and focus on marking content rather than accuracy, neatness or quantity.
- 21.7

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- Visual:** This Access Audit aims to advise on how safe your school buildings are and the general environment are for a pupil with a visual impairment. • Facilitate peer support for schools and parents to encourage support networks between schools, parents and voluntary agencies. Facilitate multi-agency work including health and social care professionals, early intervention teams, sensory specialists and school staff. • Provide specialist equipment to support learning. • Improvements can be achieved by increasing the contrast of one object to another, and by ensuring good lighting throughout the school. • Ensure clear areas of movement throughout the building, including ensuring doors are kept fully open or shut – not ajar. • Lighting should be kept consistent throughout and without shadow, particularly in corridors. All appropriate and uneven surfaces to be supported by handrails. • Equipment to be stored consistently in the same location, including the pupils' coat peg, drawer and/or locker
- 21.8

Hearing

- This access audit aims to: • Facilitate peer support for schools and parents to encourage support networks between schools, parents and voluntary agencies. • Facilitate multi-agency work including health and social care professionals, early intervention teams, sensory specialists and school staff. • Provide specialist equipment to support learning. • Appropriate use of soft furnishings, such as curtains, blinds and drapes, can reduce sound reverberation. • A quiet area to be provided for pupils. • Staff to use a radio aid or micro-link if appropriate. • Hearing impaired pupils to sit centrally in order to maximise opportunities for lip reading. • Absorptive treatment on walls and ceilings of gyms and classrooms.
- 21.9

- Admissions** • The school must ensure all admission arrangements comply with the DfE School Admissions Code. • The LA will coordinate applications for places at infant, junior, primary and secondary schools as part of the normal admissions rounds. • Provide clear information to both schools and parents/carers in relation to admissions and pupils with SEND. • The governing body/academy trust to ensure compliance with admissions law, including determining admission policies and consideration of parental applications. • To admit every child who is awarded a place, and make suitable arrangements for that child, regardless of that child's needs or support requirements.
- 21.10

Gender Identity

- The term 'gender' was first used in the 1950s to differentiate the set of feelings and behaviours that identify a person as 'male' or 'female', from their anatomical 'sex' which is determined by their chromosomes and genitals. 'Gender' is now understood as the roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that is attributed to males and females by society. Gender is one of the most basic elements of human identity. Gender is so fundamental to our identity, that without being aware of it, many aspects of human life are structured by and reveal our gender. Throughout the life course, everyone subconsciously acts out gender and reflects gender in various ways, including their dress, mannerisms, and recreational activities. These actions and reflections form components of our 'gender identity' or our sense of being 'male', 'female' or something other than these traditional categories.
- 22.1

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22.2 Since the Equality Act was introduced, innovative work with teachers has been introduced to build their confidence and competence to respond to issues of transphobia and gender identity. Most people mistakenly assume that our gender identity is defined by our anatomical sex. In the majority of cases, people's gender identity is consistent with their anatomical sex. However, some people feel and express a gender identity that is not the same as their biological sex. These inconsistencies can cause a great deal of distress and confusion to individuals, their families and their friends. Gender identity issues can also cause a great deal of anxiety among professionals working with these individuals, who may not feel informed and competent enough on this topic to provide support.

22.3 There is a common misunderstanding that gender variant individuals are gay, lesbian or bisexual however, the majority of gender variant individuals do not identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual. This is because gay, lesbian, and bisexual identities refer to an individual's 'sexual orientation' which is different than an individual's gender identity. Sexual orientation refers to an individual's emotional and sexual attraction which may be to members of the same or the opposite sex, or both. Though it is possible that some gender variant individuals will also struggle with their sexual orientation, we do not specifically address this issue in this document, focusing instead only on gender identity.

22.4 Research on the development of gender variant identities suggests that it is linked to a number of factors including neurological, hormonal, biological, social and relational influences and is not a passing phase. Instead, the development of gender identity, including a gender variant identity, occurs in stages across the lifespan. Studies on gender variant individuals suggest that the awareness and experience of being 'different' begins as a child, and that there is a long history of internal tension between the individual's anatomical sex and their sense of their gender that extends into adolescence and, in some cases, beyond.

22.5 Language to describe gender variant identities is continually changing and keeping track can be challenging. Gender variant youth self-identify in many ways and have constructed a language about their identities and experiences that is critical for other individuals to understand and respect. For example, gender variant youth may self-identify as one of many terms, including trans or gender queer. Many of these terms have had controversial histories including their use in derogatory ways, making it unclear how to address and respond to gender variant youth in a sensitive manner. If you are not sure of how an individual self identifies, don't make assumptions. Let the youth tell you how they self-identify. Admitting you are unaware is much more respectful than assuming and using the wrong language.

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22.6 In addition to adopting the language the youth themselves prefer to use, there are other important things to consider. Be cognizant of the language being used in the classroom and during school events. For example, texts and lessons that use the 'she/he' binary ignore the range of gender identities discussed in this document. By using more inclusive language, such as 'they' instead of 'she' or 'he', not only will transgender youth feel more supported but it will also help to educate the entire school community about gender diversity. Ensure that you use the appropriate language in regards to the pronouns and names of all transitioning students. Refer to a gender variant youth using the name and pronouns they have chosen to fit their gender identity instead of by their birth name which can make them vulnerable to harassment, ridicule and violence from fellow students.

22.7 Gender variant students are attending our schools whether or not they are visible to other students, staff or administrators. There are several reasons why gender variant students may not be visible within the school community. First, most gender variant youth are invisible out of fear for their safety. Individuals whose behaviours do not conform to the stereotypical societal expectations of male and female genders are vulnerable to discrimination, verbal abuse, bullying, and physical violence. Second, while some gender variant individuals' goal is to 'transition', a process where their external appearance is altered to cross from one gender to the opposite, there are a variety of other gender variant individuals that do not embody such drastic changes. The remainder adopt gender variant identities at various points along the continuum. For example, some may choose to alter only their dress. Finally, making the assumption that there are no gender variant youth in schools creates a barrier for gender variant youth to disclose their identities or for recognizing students who may be struggling with this issue.

22.8 While many gender variant students remain invisible for the reasons cited above, there have been increasing numbers of students openly identifying as 'transgender' and/or openly struggling with their gender identity in the past decade. Research studies on the proportion of transgender individuals in a population have found numbers as low as 2% and as high as 10%.²⁸ Given this prevalence in the population, it is likely that Teachers, school administrators, and health professionals have or will encounter at least one gender variant youth at some point in their professional career. Addressing gender identity issues in the school benefits the entire school community by providing safe and optimal learning environments for all students, and by increasing the ability of the entire school community to tolerate difference and to respect everyone's unique experiences. Identifying gender roles and expectations and how they play out in a variety of settings, including the school setting (even without students disclosing a gender variant identity), allows for the healthy development of all students through the creation of safe spaces, prevention of violence, and avoidance of mental health issues, such as depression and suicide, that result when these are lacking in the schools.

22.9 Gender variant individuals, by definition, challenge traditional gender roles. Youth who are targeted by their peers for not assuming the conventional gender roles may be harassed and bullied at a young age. By stepping outside of social expectations, these individuals are vulnerable to verbal abuse, physical abuse and even sexual violence at higher rates than their gender-conforming peers.

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- 22.10 If a student discloses to you their gender variant identity, it is important to support the student's self-definition and to ensure that they know they are valued. Listen to what the student has to say about how they are feeling and what their gender identity means to them and ask them what they would like you to do (if anything). It is important to not attempt to 'fix' the gender variant youth by attempting to abandon their gender variant identity. This is not effective and actually leads to low self-esteem and mental health issues such as depression, self-harm and suicide. Current research indicates that gender variant individuals consciously select people to disclose to who they trust and who they believe will be supportive and sympathetic to their gender identity. Maintaining the trust and confidentiality of the gender variant youth is, therefore, paramount.
- 22.11 For example, when a student discloses their gender identity, ask them what name they would prefer to be called, what pronouns they would prefer you to use with them, talk to them about who they have disclosed to, who is and is not supportive, and who they would like help disclosing to. Do not talk to anyone about their identity, including parents/caregivers, to whom they have not already disclosed their gender identity. The disclosure of their gender identity is one of the most challenging and important pronouncements gender variant individuals share with others. For many, it may signify the end point of a very long internal struggle to be secretive with their identity because of fear or shame. Disclosure of one's identity is a milestone that may signify self-acceptance of their identity and the beginning of a 'new life'.
- 22.12 It is important, however, to talk to the gender variant youth about the potential range of reactions to this disclosure within the school community and within the family. Discuss with them the possibility of rejection, harassment, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse, and to aid the gender variant youth in developing coping mechanisms. Assist them in identifying resources where they can get information and support (see also the list of resources at the end of this audit). Become actively involved in the creation of the school as a safe space for the gender variant student by addressing instances of bullying and harassment immediately, providing inclusive sexual health education programming and educating the entire school community about gender identity issues. For example, organize guest speakers at school assemblies who are gender variant, show films about gender identity issues in the classroom, and ensure that there is literature in the school library related to gender identity.
- 22.13 Provide a Safe Environment. The most important task for schools is to provide a safe, nurturing, non-violent atmosphere in which to learn, to grow, and to develop for all students, inclusive of all gender identities. Today, society is more diverse than ever before and Teachers, school administrators and other people involved with school-aged youth need to become informed of these diverse identities, including gender identities. The first important step for Teachers is acknowledging that gender variant youth exist in the school system and that expressing various gender identities is an acceptable way of living. Schools should not wait until a gender variant student comes forward to address the issue. By the time a student makes their identity known it is likely that they have been struggling on their own for some time

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Identity issues need to be handled with dignity and respect in the school system and be clearly outlined through inclusive policies and procedures. School administrators, teaching and support faculty can improve the school environment for gender variant students and foster an environment where people of all gender identities can be themselves, by learning about and providing accurate information about gender diversity, and by supporting gender variant students through inclusive school policy. Teachers themselves may also feel more supported when addressing gender identity issues in the school-setting when anti-harassment policies are in place. For example, a mission statement can be created for the school that affirms gender identity and demonstrates that the school is a safe space where everyone is valued. A policy against harassment and violence against gender variant individuals should be implemented in the school. By adding 'gender identity' to the school's non-discrimination policies, gender variant individuals will be given legal recourse if they have been bullied or victimized. It will also send a message to the school community that gender variant people are worthy of respect and that violence and discrimination will not be tolerated.

22.14

When harassment and violence are observed and/or reported, Teachers and administrators have a duty to react immediately and to create an environment where disrespect of any kind will not be ignored, and to build an understanding among all students of how both words and actions can hurt others. There are many different ways for Teachers to deal with situations of transphobia in the school, including

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- addressing assumptions that being gender variant is a bad thing and that everyone in the school environment deserves to be respected;
- confronting the stereotypes and misinformation behind the insults and abuse; and,
- making a plan with students of more appropriate responses to insults rather than physical violence or reverse name-calling.

Students should also be aware of where they can go if they have experienced harassment or abuse and they should be given the option of anonymous reporting, since some students may fear retribution for reporting victimization. The names of staff who are most knowledgeable regarding gender identity issues should be identified and publicized within the school so students can access the appropriate person/people to contact if they have questions or concerns. To resolve problems quickly and to avoid stigmatizing the gender variant person in the situation, allies and role models should be located near areas of the school where students are likely to encounter prejudice from peers (i.e., near bathrooms and/or locker rooms). Inclusive language should be included on all school-wide forms, printed material and websites. For example, schools should consider adding categories other than male and female on all forms so as not to ignore the variety of Questions & Answers.

22.16

Such categories may include transgender, two-spirit, and gender variant. By using more inclusive language, not only will gender variant youth feel more supported but it will also help to educate the entire school community about gender diversity. A mechanism should also be in place for those students who wish to change their gender designation on school records (i.e., students who are transitioning should have their new gender reflected on documents. The names of individuals within the guidance/ registrar's office who can facilitate name and gender changes on school records should be clearly publicized and a simple, one-stop procedure should be in place for transitioning youth.

22.17

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Teachers should be given the opportunity for in-service training and development on gender identity issues. While head teachers may recognize the need to address issues of gender identity in the school, many teachers and school administrators are not sufficiently trained and may not feel comfortable taking on that role. Teachers should be able to reflect on their personal assumptions and beliefs about gender roles in order to facilitate a non-judgmental learning environment. Training sessions on gender identity issues should be made available for all staff. For example, Professional Development days could have workshops or presentations to raise awareness and levels of knowledge about the experiences and needs of gender variant students. These workshops could provide an opportunity to discuss the skills needed to be a good ally and to develop an 'action plan' or list of concrete actions needed to improve the school environment for people of all genders.

22.18

Raise Awareness By educating the entire school community on gender identity issues, Teachers and administrators can help to reduce the risks of discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization experienced by gender variant youth. Opportunities should be provided for the entire school body to learn about gender diversity through activities such as public seminars or presentations, distribution of educational materials and hosting performances that challenge gender norms and/or educate on gender identity issues. Furthermore, a web-based school resource guide outlining the school's policy on sexual orientation and gender identity can be developed and distributed for new, existing and prospective gender variant students and staff. When including all students in learning and awareness activities you are affirming and enhancing the self-esteem and sense of self of gender variant youth and fostering an environment of tolerance for all students.

22.19

Teachers should challenge gender norms within the classroom and school community, such as "only boys play rough sports" or "only girls wear nail polish" and avoid activities that require students to choose a gender (e.g., avoid dividing the class into boys and girls groups for activities). All school organizations, clubs and teams should be supportive and create a welcoming space for all students. Gender variant youth should be allowed to join sports teams according to their self-identified gender as opposed to requiring them to join based on their biological sex. Gender variant individuals should not have to disclose their gender in order to participate if they are not ready. One of the main areas where gender variant people experience psychological/ emotional distress and harassment is in the use of public washrooms. To avoid potential conflicts, publicize to all students and faculty the location of single occupancy bathrooms and designated gender neutral facilities including the creation of private showers in locker rooms with curtains or doors. Schools can also create a gender neutral restroom so gender variant individuals can use the restroom they find appropriate

22.20

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22.21 Families are not always a safe place for gender variant youth. It is important not to involve the parents/caregivers of gender variant youth unless the youth themselves have already disclosed their identity to their families or you have a legal duty to report such as in the case of risk of self-harm. The gender variant youth may be put at risk within their homes if parents/caregivers who were unaware of their child's identity are approached by the school. Parents/caregivers whose children "come out" (disclose their identity) to them may have a variety of reactions ranging from loving acceptance to rejection and expulsion of the child from the home. Parents/caregivers who discover their child's gender identity accidentally may be in emotional crisis. All parents/caregivers of gender variant youth can be supported by directing them to community and counselling resources and support groups to help deal with the range of emotions including shock, anger, grief, guilt, and shame. Parents/caregivers will likely be seeking answers to many questions and should be provided with information on gender identity to educate them on what their child is experiencing and why, as well as the health and safety concerns of their gender variant child.

22.22 Parents/caregivers of gender variant youth may need help in understanding that the gender identity was not caused by poor parenting, nor did their child choose it. Well-informed and accepting parents/caregivers can be allies in ensuring the healthy development and resiliency of gender variant youth. For example, parents/caregivers can help gender variant youth learn techniques of recognizing and combating stigma, discrimination, and verbal abuse, and to develop coping strategies. All children, regardless of gender identity, need support, acceptance, and compassion from their families to thrive and parents/caregivers should be supported in this role to ensure the healthy development of gender variant youth.

22.23 Resiliency is a person's ability to overcome adversity and effectively cope with and adapt to stressful and challenging situations in life. While the school setting can often be a stressful environment for gender variant youth, schools can take steps to become a safe and respectful place for them. 'Safe spaces' should be created in the school where gender variant youth are welcome and can find a sense of belonging. Gender variant students often feel isolated. Creating a support or social group where they feel part of a community can lead to greater sense of self-worth and increase the likelihood that they will remain in school. Research indicates that low school attachment, high feelings of alienation from school and peers leads to greater risk of dropping out. Gender identity resources should also be made available in the school libraries and be included in the curriculum. Teachers should also consider introducing resources into their planning which address prejudices and gender identity issues. Exposing students to gender identity issues and resources will not cause students to question their gender identity. Rather, it provides assurance to the student who already knows that they are different and who often suffer the consequences of that difference (i.e., name calling, harassment etc.), that they are not alone.

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22.24 By providing the appropriate support systems, schools have the capacity to build the resiliency of gender variant youth. Not all gender variant youth will feel comfortable in a school that is not aware or supportive of their needs. With the appropriate resources and role models, gender variant youth have a greater chance of overcoming their struggles of discovering and developing their gender identity. The tolerance and acceptance of gender diversity in a school setting will also create an atmosphere of safety for other students who are or who may feel different. The failure to respond adequately to the educational, social, cultural and public health needs of gender variant youth removes these youth from key supports and protective factors in their lives. Lack of supports and protective factors, particularly within the school system where they spend much of their time, increases the risks they experience as vulnerable youth and may encourage them to leave school altogether. It is critical that the schools work to support gender variant youth to develop resilience, and to become healthy, happy and productive adults.

22.25 Schools fall under the Public Sector Equality Duty: they must eliminate discrimination; provide equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between minority groups and others. Religion or belief may not be used to discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender variant/trans/ non-binary or non-gender people.

Action Plan upon Presentation of a pupil

22.26

Upon presentation, name and gender-marker (pronoun) change, including on documents, school records, DfE returns (keep secure any hard copy or IT documents with old name/pronouns). Reissue any award or other certificates (N.B social name change does not require anything other than the young person's expressed intentions and parents'/guardians' agreement; children may obtain a Deed Poll or Statutory Declaration may help to facilitate correction of documents. 16+ don't need parents'/guardians' support. <http://www.ukdp.co.uk/name-change-age-restrictions/> Date of transition (change of gender role), including any uniform requirements, agreed with young person and family;

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It is up to schools to decide what facilities they provide, including whether to provide unisex or gender neutral toilets, and what uniform policy they set – they know what works best for their school and we know there are thousands of brilliant teachers creating supportive environments for their pupils. We expect them to take into account parents' wishes and the needs of their pupils, but we don't dictate how they should do this.

22.27

Toilet and changing facilities: ensure that these are immediately available in line with new gender presentation, and the young person's wishes;
 Disclosures: To whom, by whom, how and when? May include communication to teachers, pastoral staff, school nurse and other staff, governors; possibly, parents of children in class; children in peer group, whole school? Only give information when necessary; respect confidentiality and privacy e.g. a new pupil who has already transitioned need not disclose;
 Press Intrusion: Prepare generic equality statement to be issued if necessary. Alert office staff who respond to telephone calls, so that confidentiality and privacy is not breached.

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22.28

Training: Teachers and pastoral staff, governors; may include use of e-learning: http://cs1.e-learningforhealthcare.org.uk/public/GEV/GEV_01_001/story.html
 Literature: e.g. leaflets for parents, signposting e-Learning;
 Support: Appoint mentor for child; signpost other support groups for family. See: Directory of groups www.TranzWiki.net; GIRES at www.gires.org.uk
 Mermaids at www.mermaids.org.uk Allsorts at <http://www.allsortsvouth.org.uk>

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Schools may now be reviewing their policies and the training that they provide for their staff in the light of equality legislation. One of their aims is likely to be to create a whole school ethos in which bullying of any kind will not be tolerated. Schools may see that, to protect pupils having the gender reassignment characteristic, they need to introduce special pre-emptive measures to prevent the transphobic bullying to which this group is especially vulnerable. Also, some schools may have an urgent need to deal with a specific situation involving a pupil in which transphobic bullying has already occurred or seems likely, for example:

22.29

A school of 1,000 pupils should expect around 10 to be gender variant to some degree. Although the number who reveal their gender variance in childhood or adolescence is rising, it is still the case that the majority of them are likely to remain hidden during their school years, because the environment is perceived to be hostile, so they fear rejection and discrimination. However, the number of gender variant people of all ages who are willing to reveal their 'core' gender identities is growing rapidly as understanding grows about their condition, and society and the law become more supportive.

Time out: Children (especially during puberty) may need clinic appointments – miss school and need to make up lost lessons; from start of puberty, possibly on hormone-blockers leading to lack of energy, see: <https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/care-and-treatment/our-clinicalservices/gender-identity-development-service-gids/>
<http://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/gendervariance>
 Curriculum: Introduce equality and human right concepts in classroom; see: www.gires.org.uk/education/classroom-lesson-plans/; Primary level: Penguin Stories; Middle school: Peter's story (parent is trans); middle and senior school, The Gender Question.

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Racial Equality

- 23.1 Education has a crucial role to play in bringing about a fair and just society. It is important that people learn to respect themselves and each other as citizens, so that we can build a society which is based on mutual respect and understanding. Government policy is that pupils from ethnic or religious minorities should have the same opportunity as all others to profit from what their schools can offer them. Low expectations, prejudice, intolerance and racism have no place whatever in our schools. Schools should aim to preserve and transmit our national values in a way which accepts Britain's ethnic and religious diversity and promotes understanding and racial harmony.
- 23.2 The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report stressed that education has a fundamental role to play in eliminating racism and promoting and valuing racial diversity. The new national curriculum in England requires schools to ensure that they take account of these responsibilities in curriculum planning and delivery. Estyn inspectors in Wales and OFSTED inspectors in England now evaluate and report on a school's effectiveness in addressing a range of racial equality issues, including procedures for reporting racist incidents. Schools have no excuse for complacency. Every school should be taking action to eradicate racism and to promote and value racial and cultural diversity.
- 23.3 There are standards for racial equality in seven core areas of education in England and Wales. By working towards these standards, schools will ensure that they are implementing the recommendations put forward in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report and fulfilling the requirements of the National Curriculum and of OFSTED and Estyn inspections. Schools should identify needs and prepare funding applications, such as for the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant (EMTAG). Schools will only begin to challenge racism and promote and value racial diversity effectively when they place partnership with pupils, parents, staff and local communities at the heart of their work. Support and assistance is available from organisations such as racial equality councils, which have expertise in this area, and local authorities, which have a statutory duty to challenge racism and promote good race relations between people of different racial groups.
- 23.4 Every school has a key role to play in eradicating racism and valuing diversity. The government's acceptance of the recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report, published in 1999, reinforces this responsibility for all schools, including those with few or no ethnic minority pupils. Racism exists in all communities, and racist groups target both urban and rural areas. Every school should take action to challenge and prevent racism. Developments in communications and technology and changing patterns of work mean that, in the course of their lives, young people are likely to meet and interact with people from many different communities, cultures and backgrounds. Schools have an important role to play in increasing mutual understanding and respect, and appreciation of cultural diversity

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Most schools have equal opportunities policies. However, schools do not always take steps to ensure that these policies are translated into clear plans of action that are implemented and systematically reviewed. Various research and data indicate that schools should be doing a lot more to challenge racial discrimination and promote racial equality. For example:

- up to 50% of the perpetrators of racist incidents are under 17 years old
- the levels of achievement for some ethnic minority groups, particularly Black Caribbean, Gypsy Traveller, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, are persistently lower than those for others, with these disparities becoming more marked for some groups of pupils as they progress through the school system
- black pupils are much more likely to be excluded from school than white pupils committing similar offences.

Eradicating racism and promoting racial equality must be an integral part of school life and should be explicit and implicit in any work or activity that takes place within the school.

The CRE standards for racial equality will help schools, including governing bodies, to:

- develop and implement clear policies, procedures and strategies to promote racial equality
- identify and promote such good practice as already exists within the school
- work within the school's existing strategic planning processes and link racial equality initiatives to the school development plan
- address race issues in relation to behaviour and performance
- demonstrate that they are complying with the Race Relations Act 1976
- implement the recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report
- meet the requirements of OFSTED inspections of schools in England and Estyn inspections of schools in Wales; these include an evaluation of schools' effectiveness in addressing race issues in specific areas
- comply with the General Statement on Inclusion accompanying the National Curriculum for Schools in England (see Appendix 6)
- identify needs and make funding applications, such as for the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant (EMTAG)
- establish a socially inclusive ethos and environment

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Promoting racial equality through effective policies will help the school to ensure that:

- all pupils achieve their full potential
 - expectations of all pupils are equally high
 - all pupils have access to, and can make full use of, the school's facilities and resources
 - the school reflects the local communities it serves and responds to their needs
 - all pupils are prepared for life in a diverse and multi-ethnic society
 - all pupils understand what prejudice means, how discrimination occurs and how they can take a stand against all forms of racism
- 23.7
- a positive ethos and environment is developed within the school
 - the school challenges and deals effectively with racist incidents
 - racial equality targets are systematically identified and included in the school development plan
 - planning and teaching of the National Curriculum in England complies with the requirements of the General Statement on Inclusion

- 23.8
- The Standards are organised within seven areas: A. Policy, Leadership and Management B. Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment C. Admission, Attendance, Discipline and Exclusion D. Pupils – Personal Development, Attainment and Progress E. Attitudes and Environment F. Parents, Governors and Community Partnership G. Staffing – Recruitment, Training and Professional Development

- 23.9
- POLICY, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**
- The school has the following in place: A written racial equality policy (either a separate policy or a distinct section within a broader equal opportunities policy), Racial equality is included as an explicit aim in all of the school's policies. The school has a policy for dealing with racial harassment which clearly sets out the procedures for handling complaints and incidents. The policies have been endorsed and adopted by the school's governing body and implemented by the school's management team. A racial equality action plan, which is linked to the school development plan, sets clear targets for addressing race issues. Steps are taken to ensure that everyone associated with the school is kept informed about the school's racial equality and racial harassment policies and procedures, and abides by them. Racial equality policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and their effectiveness evaluated. Reviews and evaluations of racial equality and racial harassment policies and procedures take account of the views of all sections of the school community.

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CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT PLANNING AND ORGANISATION

Curriculum planning takes account of the ethnicity, background and language needs of all pupils. The school monitors and evaluates its effectiveness in providing an appropriate curriculum for pupils from all ethnic groups. The criteria used for allocating pupils to optional subjects are fair and equitable to pupils from all ethnic groups. Assessment methods are checked for cultural bias and action is taken to remove any bias that is identified. The allocation of pupils to teaching groups is fair and equitable to pupils from all ethnic groups. Assessment outcomes are used to:

- identify the specific needs of ethnic minority pupils
- inform policies, planning and the allocation of resources.

Teaching methods and styles take account of the needs of pupils from different ethnic groups. Teaching methods encourage positive attitudes to ethnic difference, cultural diversity and racial equality. Steps are taken to ensure that the curriculum draws on areas of interest to pupils from all ethnic groups. Racial equality and ethnic diversity are promoted and racism and discrimination challenged in all areas of the curriculum. The school takes active steps to ensure that resources in all areas of the curriculum are inclusive. Resources that promote a greater understanding of cultural diversity, racial equality, and the importance of challenging racism and racial discrimination are used in all areas of the curriculum.

23.10

ADMISSION, ATTENDANCE, DISCIPLINE AND EXCLUSION

Active steps are taken to ensure that the admission process is fair and equitable to pupils from all ethnic groups. Steps are taken to ensure that all selection methods are fair and equitable to pupils from all ethnic groups. The school monitors pupil attendance by ethnic group and uses the data to develop strategies to address poor attendance. Provision is made for pupils to take time off for religious observance. The school identifies and adopts good practice strategies in order to reduce any differences in rates of exclusion between ethnic groups. The school's procedures for disciplining pupils and managing behaviour are fair and applied equally to all pupils, irrespective of ethnicity. The process of excluding a pupil is fair and equitable to pupils from all ethnic groups. Strategies to reintegrate long term truants and excluded pupils address the needs of pupils from all ethnic groups.

23.11

PUPILS – PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, ATTAINMENT AND PROGRESS

Pupils' attainment and progress in individual subjects are monitored by ethnic group (and by gender, language and disability). The school develops strategies for tackling unjustified disparities in the attainment and progress of particular ethnic groups. The school values the achievements and progress of pupils from all ethnic groups. All pupils have equal access to extra-curricular activities. Every pupil is offered the support and guidance they need. Staff challenge racism and stereotyping and promote racial equality in education, employment, training and career choice. Steps are taken to ensure that pupils on work experience are not subjected to racism or racial harassment.

23.12

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ATTITUDES AND ENVIRONMENT

A

'whole school' approach is used to promote racial equality and eliminate racial discrimination. Diversity is recognised as having a positive role to play within the school. The school recognises the importance of language to a person's sense of identity and belonging. Clear procedures are in place to ensure that racist incidents, racial discrimination and racial harassment are dealt with promptly, firmly and consistently. Immediate action is taken to remove racist graffiti from all school property. All staff are trained to deal effectively with racist incidents, racism, racial harassment, prejudice and stereotyping.

- 23.13** A sensitive and structured system of support is available to victims of racism, racial discrimination, racist incidents and racial harassment. The school has clear procedures for dealing with perpetrators of racist incidents. Active links are established with external organisations dealing with racist incidents and racial harassment.

PARENTS, GOVERNORS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

All parents are regularly informed of their child's progress. Proactive steps are taken to involve ethnic minority parents in the school. People from ethnic minority communities are encouraged to become school governors. The school ensures that governor support is appropriate for all ethnic groups. The school's premises and facilities are equally available for use by all ethnic groups. The school has active links with ethnic minority community groups. The school encourages community groups to use its facilities for after-school activities and for holiday schemes.

23.14

STAFFING – RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Recruitment and selection procedures are consistent with the statutory race relations Code of Practice in Employment. Everyone involved in recruitment and selection adheres to the school's recruitment and selection procedures. Steps are taken to encourage people from underrepresented ethnic minority groups to apply for positions at all levels in the school. The recruitment and selection process is monitored and reviewed to ensure that discrimination is not taking place and to identify examples of good practice. The school monitors the employment and professional development of staff by ethnic group. Staff and governors go through regular and systematic training programmes on racial equality issues. Proactive steps are taken to identify, support and provide opportunities for the professional development of staff from all ethnic groups. A person's effectiveness in dealing with racial equality issues is addressed through various line management mechanisms. The school takes active steps to ensure that selection for redundancy avoids racial discrimination.

23.15

Means of escape

Schools must comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Services) Order 2005 to ensure that they have adequate fire precautions in place to allow the safe escape of all occupants in case of fire. Staff and students with disabilities should be able to evacuate a building promptly in the case of an emergency.

24.1

Ensuring safe evacuation in an emergency is a complex issue, requiring consideration of a broad range of factors that it is not possible to cover in detail in this audit.

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Some areas for consideration include:

- the use of both visual and audible alarm systems
- escape doors with opening devices and opening forces designed to meet the needs of both students and staff
- balancing personal dignity and independence with safety and speed of evacuation
- the risk of using lifts or evacuation chairs to evacuate people with mobility difficulties down or up to ground level
- ensuring that evacuation chairs are suitable for the intended users
- ensuring that emergency contact facilities inside lifts (phones or intercom systems) are monitored at all times that the School may be used
- the needs of students who require personal care – for example, someone could be toileting with a carer when the alarm is raised or other respiratory conditions in particular the possible impact of smoke on everybody, particularly students with asthma

24.2

- the use of zones and compartmentation to support phased evacuation of the building
- the use of vibrating alarms or other assistive technologies to raise the alarm for staff or students who are deaf or hard of hearing
- the location of assembly points to be reachable by all students
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for staff and students who may need assistance during evacuation
- making students aware of evacuation procedures, which should be practiced regularly throughout the School year.
- need assistance during evacuation

24.3

The School building is fitted with an audible alarm system but no visual means of warning. This is a potential barrier to hearing impaired users but in terms of a pupil, this is a matter that can simply be managed as teachers will be responsible for sweeping all areas and ensuring all pupils are evacuated.

24.4

People with disabilities can evacuate the building, and reach places of safety or refuge. Refuge systems must be provided where upper floors are made accessible. Each disabled pupil must have a personal emergency egress plan drawn up which would deal with any issues such as assistance in the event of fire. For further guidance as to such plans you should refer to personal emergency egress plans (PEEPS) published by the northern access officers group.

24.5

Exit routes are regularly checked for obstacles and there were no obstacles on the day of the audit. Alarm systems are regularly checked by a qualified engineer. Fire doors regularly are checked by a qualified engineer. All fire doors are regularly maintained. The escape routes are clearly signed. An individual should be delegated to ensure all escape routes are free from obstructions. This needs to be done daily

24.6

Staff members are trained in helping mobility impaired people evacuate. Continue to train staff to assist in evacuation procedures especially in helping the mobility impaired. Awareness training maybe required.

24.7

The places of refuge are large enough for the projected number of people likely to need them. Train staff to assist in evacuation procedures. Awareness training maybe required

24.8

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- 24.9 A fire risk assessment been carried out. Ensure that all fire extinguishers are wall mounted and checked annually. Ensure fire extinguishers are wall mounted, clearly signed and checked annually. In the event of an emergency people with mobility impairments often get left behind and have to wait for the emergency services due to inadequate evacuation methods. In an emergency you may be
- 24.10 faced with a high number of students and staff members looking to evacuate the School building quickly. Provide wheelchair handling training to teachers and caretakers

Building Management

School premises, that is a School's buildings and grounds, should be maintained to a sufficient standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of the pupils using them is ensured. In complying with this regulation, regard should be had to the provisions of all premises-related legislation including, but not limited to :

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- 25.1 • The Control of Asbestos Regulations
- The Building Regulations

Accessibility should be a key consideration when routine maintenance is being carried out, as it often presents an opportunity to improve the accessibility of a building. For example, when handrails are being painted, the colour selected should ensure good visual contrast between the handrail and the wall.

- 25.2 The School annually reviews its site to ensure overall safety and accessibility of all aspects of the School buildings and site and makes an action plan for items which need to be updated – e.g. lopping trees around the School.

Good practice in maintenance routines include

- regularly cleaning paths to remove debris, such as leaves, ice and snow, and ensuring that they are clear of obstructions such as bicycles and motor cycles
- ensuring circulation routes are kept clear of obstructions
- 25.3 • maintaining door closers to keep opening forces to a minimum
- ensuring accessible toilets are not used for storing cleaning equipment or other materials
- using clear and legible signage
- updating signage when the way the building is used changes

- 25.4 The external routes (including steps and ramps) are kept clear, unobstructed and free from surface water, ice and snow.

- 25.5 Windows, blinds and lamps were clean and in working order.

- 25.6 Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy has a written policy on compliance with relevant health and safety laws which is effectively implemented. The School premises, accommodation and facilities provided are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

Lifts and Stair lifts

A.D.M recommends

Lifting Devices

Passenger lifts preferred option for all buildings, however for existing buildings in exceptional circumstances a platform lift may be considered and in exceptional circumstances, in an existing building giving access to a small area with a unique function, a wheelchair platform stair lift could be considered and argued in the access statement. All new developments to have a passenger lift provided serving all storeys. An unobstructed manoeuvring space of 1500mm x 1500mm or 900mm straight access route to the lift.

Landing call buttons located between 900mm and 1100mm – 500mm from any return wall, with raised symbols for tactile reading. Controls to have contrasting finish from background. Avoid dark colours to car floor and ensure floor frictional qualities similar or higher than the landing floor.

A handrail on one wall 900mm above the floor.

An emergency communication system.

Passenger Lifts Lift car to be designed in accordance with Diagram 11 A.D.M. - 1100mm wide x 1400mm deep and the provision of a mirror to allow wheelchair user to see behind. Min 800mm clear width of opening doors – doors to have timing and re-opening activators to allow for people to enter or leave car. Doors to contrast surrounding surfaces. Car controls between 900mm and 1200mm. Audible and visual indication of lift arrival and location in and out the car. Avoid use of visually and acoustically reflective wall surfaces.

26.3 Lifting Platforms Vertical travel distance of 2.0m maximum with no enclosure and no floor penetration. More than 2.0m with a lift enclosure. Over 3m travel a product certificate issued by a Notified Body is required. Continuous pressure controls located between 800mm and 1100mm and at least 400mm from any return walls. Landing call buttons located between 900mm and 1100mm – 500mm from any return wall, with raised symbols for tactile reading. Controls to have contrasting finish from background. Three platform sizes depending on enclosures and accompanied or not; 800mm wide x 1250mm deep minimum – non-enclosed platform and no provision made for wheelchair companion. 900mm wide x 1400mm deep minimum – enclosed platform and no provision made for wheelchair companion. 1100mm wide x 1400mm deep minimum – 2 doors at 90 degrees relative to each other / enclosed platform and provision made for wheelchair companion. The School has a lifting platform which is regularly maintained.

26.4 Doors either 800mm or 900mm wide (for 1100mm wide x 1400mm deep platform). If possible position doors at different levels to allow forward movement in and out. Clear instructions are available for use. Audible and visual announcement of platform arrival. Avoid use of visually and acoustically reflective wall surfaces. Watch use in unsupervised environment.

Lifts are essential for many people requiring step free access to different floor levels but are only likely to be available in larger schools. A lift is a major investment and will be disruptive to install but should be considered when opportunities arise.

There are improvements that can be made to an existing lift, these include:

- 26.5
- Many lift cars have an integral handrail for support but one could be added if not. Sometimes it is helpful to add a drop down seat or have a chair available outside the lift that can be used.
 - Consider adding a half-height mirror (handrail to ceiling of the lift car) on the rear wall of the lift car. This is helpful for wheelchair users who may need to reverse out. People with hearing impairments find it useful as they are more aware of other people entering the lift with them. If a mirror exists but it is full height, it is helpful to add some indication to the bottom half of the mirror (self-adhesive frosting effect would be ideal) so that a visually impaired person does not mistake the mirror for an opening.

Outdoor Spaces and Outdoor Circulation

Outdoor circulation needs to have a clear rationale and provide a variety of accessible routes to suit the whole spectrum of children, minimising gradients so that they can easily access all outdoor facilities. There should be:

27.1

- shelter available along routes for more vulnerable children, with seats every 50m on long pedestrian routes
- safe and easily navigable surfaces (wheelchair accessible), with safe changes in level or transitions between surfaces - both ramps and steps are needed where level access is absent.
- good sightlines for overseeing children's safety, with no hidden spaces.
- noisy busy routes separate from quieter sheltered spaces, so more vulnerable children can make their own way at their own pace
- level thresholds for access by wheelchair users and to avoid staff lifting mobility equipment
- wide enough gates and wide paths with defined edges, well away from outward opening windows and any hazards clearly identified.

1200mm, preferably 1500mm and 1800mm for busy routes with passing places as required.

- 27.2
- Bays off circulation routes can be provided for children to sit and talk, rest, re-orientate or calm down and let others pass – but they need to allow clear sightlines and passive supervision, since hidden spaces can encourage inappropriate behaviour. There should be outdoor access for curriculum and social activities and for means of escape but it should be controllable for safety and security, especially where there is a possibility that children might try to run out of school.

Pitches can be all-weather surfaces or grass, provided they are laid out for playing team games. If grass, it should be capable of sustaining seven hours a week per school during term time. (Rotation allowing grass to recover may be needed.) Refer to the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 – <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sbregulatoryinformation/> For technical information on all-weather pitches, refer to Sport England's A Guide to the Design, Specification and Construction of Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) including Multi-Sport Synthetic Turf Pitches (STPs) – http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_guidance.

27.3



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Access to a separate protected outdoor space for social and recreational use should be provided, using hard and soft surfaced areas. Health and safety are paramount. Providing a variety of areas for different types of play allows children to make choices and engage in different activities. There may be a need to separate boisterous activities from quieter sheltered spaces for more vulnerable children.

There may be:

- space to run, play and kick a ball
- areas with fixed adventure play equipment with safety surfaces
- social spaces with fixed seating to sit and talk, or quiet places to be alone
- areas and routes laid out for mobility training with safe simulations of hazards that children might meet

- 27.4** outside school - helping them to develop independence skills. Landscaped paths, fencing and gates, appropriately scaled, could be used to divide areas, to add variety and help with supervision. The type and amount of sensory stimulus and play equipment will vary according to needs and should be discussed with staff. Wheelchair accessible equipment is available from specialists. All items should be safe and sturdy.



Outdoor learning is mostly experiential and supports work that is different from inside the classroom. There may be:

- a covered outdoor space 2.5m deep, thus extending a classroom on the ground floor
- a suitable external space, 55-65m², which may be used as an outdoor classroom. Consulting with staff is essential. For instance, direct external access and views over activity may distract some children and others may want to run off, so a form of access control may be needed. However, access to a safe contained outdoor place may help some children to calm down. The natural features of any site can provide a rich resource for learning. Grounds can also be enhanced by providing planting, ponds and nature trails – developing them can involve children and staff as part of curriculum activities. Effective supervision, appropriate sight lines and security are essential to avoid children straying and to provide protection from unauthorised visitors. Sensory planting, vegetable gardens and greenhouses are important resources and may be developed by older pupils as part of vocational courses.

- 27.5** ponds and nature trails – developing them can involve children and staff as part of curriculum activities. Effective supervision, appropriate sight lines and security are essential to avoid children straying and to provide protection from unauthorised visitors. Sensory planting, vegetable gardens and greenhouses are important resources and may be developed by older pupils as part of vocational courses.



It is important that all students can access and use the external spaces in a School, so that they can participate in social and recreational activities. Outdoor space in Schools normally comprises a mix of hard surfaced and grassed areas. While grass may be a difficult surface for wheelchair users, access to grassed pitches can be provided using pathways or matting products. As well as areas for activities such as games and sports, quieter social spaces with seating should also be provided for students to use. Where playgrounds are provided, equipment should be carefully selected to ensure accessibility for all students, including wheelchair users, students who use crutches and walking frames, and those with hearing loss or vision loss.

- 27.6** use. Where playgrounds are provided, equipment should be carefully selected to ensure accessibility for all students, including wheelchair users, students who use crutches and walking frames, and those with hearing loss or vision loss.



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27.7

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy has a range of outside areas including courts, grassed areas, an adventure playground, a MUGA, outdoor covered play areas and large playgrounds. The spaces are accessible and students can enjoy the areas together. There is seating available outdoors for students. It is advisable to include some seating also suitable for a child in a wheelchair so they could feel more inclusive. Benches are available from certain suppliers which incorporate room for a person in a wheelchair to sit alongside their more able bodied peers, such as illustrated here.

Purchase a suitable outdoor picnic table for wheelchair users if a child in a wheelchair is admitted into the school.



B

M



27.8

Ensuring that sports facilities are accessible to your disabled pupils will greatly aid their inclusion within the school. It could also be that a non-disabled pupil playing sport on your playing fields may have a disabled parent who may wish to watch his or her offspring participating in sports. Vehicle access to your playing fields is relatively simply achieved and should a disabled parent wish to view their child, for example Sports Day, special provision should be made to gain access to the sports fields.

Plan to provide accessible parking in close proximity to the sports fields on an ad hoc basis. You will need to ensure that parents needs are ascertained prior to such an event and information in relation to visitors special needs should be sought at the time invitations to Sports Days and similar events are made.

C

OG